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The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 8, 2017

Day 51

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 8, 2017

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us each pray and reflect in our own way. May we remember to be deliberate, be thoughtful, meticulous but patient, determined but clear headed, and evoke that respecting our differences and celebrating our diversity is what makes us stronger together. 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. I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 23

Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to have a moment to rise today to speak in Committee of the Whole to Bill 23, the Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017. The need for this discussion stems from the court order that was consented to on January 6, 2017. At that time the Alberta government agreed to expand the Alberta Human Rights Act to include age as protected grounds under sections 4 and 5. Because of this a one-year delay was given by the courts to provide the government time to consider what, if any, exemptions would be appropriate and to address any unintended consequences.

Madam Chair, age is currently prohibited grounds of discrimination in all areas other than sections 4 and 5 of the act. Section 4 protects against discrimination when any goods, services, accommodation, or facilities normally available to the public are provided, and then section 5 prohibits discrimination regarding tenancy, including both commercial and residential accommodations.

Madam Chair, over the course of last summer consultations were conducted through July and August of 2017. During this period the government reached out directly to stakeholders and asked them to send us their feedback both in writing and some in person. There was also a discussion guide that was prepared with background information and questions for them to answer. In some cases stakeholders were invited in for face-to-face meetings.

We consulted a variety of stakeholder groups, including seniors' advocacy groups, seniors' housing and public housing groups, civil liberties and legal groups, condominium-related groups, rental accommodation groups, municipalities and related groups, large nonprofit entities, disability community groups, hospitality and accommodation industry groups as well. In addition, they were also asked to share the discussion guide with their own networks to ensure appropriate distribution. In three face-to-face meetings department officials met with representatives from 11 different

organizations, and in total written feedback was received from over 70 individuals and organizations.

Madam Chair, we believe these proposed amendments will strike the right balance between the interests of many different groups. Many have asked in the past: how is seniors-only housing going to be affected by these changes? As a government we recognize that older Albertans may choose to live together in a community of people at a similar age in life. Proposed amendments to the act intend to allow seniors-only housing to continue without violating the act, and although the minimum age for seniors-only housing is 55, it's also possible for buildings to choose an age limit higher than 55.

Also, through these consultations many have expressed a need to include live-in caregivers. Those concerns were heard, and the act will include exemptions in the case of live-in caregivers.

Madam Chair, the government recognizes that Albertans have bought condominiums on the basis of the bylaws at the time. The proposed approach is that grandparenting of existing age-restricted condominiums will end 15 years after the coming into force of Bill 23. This provides Albertans affected by these changes plenty of notice before the new rules impact their condos.

Now, just to quote Hugh Willis, the co-chair of the Government Advocacy Committee of the Canadian Condominium Institute, the north Alberta chapter, he said:

The belief that individuals should have a choice in their housing and lifestyle decisions is strongly supported by the condominium owners we consulted with in Alberta. At the same time, we recognize the national trend that restrictions by age can affect communities where there is a critical shortage of housing. As a result, we feel that the 15-year transition period is a reasonable and common sense solution to allow existing condominium owners to make consumer decisions.

Madam Chair, to wrap up, I believe this bill strikes a proper balance of the needs of Albertans, and I think it represents an opportunity to embrace diversity in Alberta. It also aligns our legislation with other jurisdictions across Canada, and like much of what this government has done to date, it is long overdue. It should provide certainty to the people that have requested it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I want to thank my colleague for his comments today. You know, one of the interesting things we do as MLAs is have the opportunity to speak to all sorts of people in our constituency. Certainly, as my colleague has pointed out, we all have folks in our constituency who are concerned about this.

I was visited by a lovely woman in my constituency who had concerns because she lives in a fantastic condo complex. I think we've heard this from a number of people in Calgary-North West. They have a 40-plus condo complex. Her concern was that most of the people in there were, you know, well into their 50s. She said to me: we've actually had our children, we've raised our children, and we're ready right now to be in a place where we certainly love having them come on the weekends, and that is fantastic, but during the week we kind of want the tranquility of what we have, which is a relatively child-free environment. A lot of these folks are grandparents, and they delight in having their grandkids around on the weekend.

Among her concerns, certainly, was a concern about the fact that she would be faced with the spectre of having people move in with multiple children, that young people would be moving in and

having parties, and she was concerned that what she and her fellow occupants had worked to achieve was certainly not something that they would end up with at the end of the day. We had a great conversation. I think, you know, one of the things about making sure that we get the communication right on this bill is to talk about the things that ensure folks like this woman who came to visit me are taken care of in all of this.

First of all, as my colleague mentioned, the exemption for live-in caregivers is an important one. It's important because people were worried about that sort of thing. Also, the idea that this is grandfathered for 15 years gives them an opportunity to sit back and take a look at what they want in terms of a structure and make some decisions; also, the fact that you can now convert to a 55-plus facility any point in this time over the next 15 years, and then you have a facility that, of course, is now 55-plus.

9:10

So for this lovely woman and a lot of the folks who live in this building, their fears were calmed by this idea. She went on to say to me: you know, we absolutely understand the need for the Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017. There was no argument there. In fact, as we know on this side of the aisle, human rights are something we have to look carefully at, especially in this day and age, and we know that we have to look even more closely at this because we are facing an ever-present spectre of groups of people who would rather see us enjoy less in terms of human rights, if I may be so vague.

At the end of the day, I think what we have here in the Human Rights Amendment Act is – first of all, we know that the courts have told us that age is prohibited grounds for discrimination. We also know that we have fantastic facilities for folks who have gotten to that point in their life where they've raised their children and they want to have a tranquil environment, where there's not a lot of noise to worry about and they're not worried about parties happening in their facilities. They love having their grandkids around and younger kids around, but at the end of the day they want to ensure that they have a facility that is what they paid for. When you go out and you buy a piece of real estate, whether it's a condo or anything else, you're making an investment, and you want to be careful that that investment is going to be worth, hopefully, more at the end of the day or when you decide to sell than it was when you bought it.

I think what we have here is a very well-thought-out piece of legislation. It takes into account that we have folks with concerns. We've addressed those concerns. You know, along with the 55-plus group of condos we have the 40-plus groups that have every opportunity now to take their time, to have their meetings of their condo boards, to canvass the folks who live in their buildings, and to say: maybe for a lot of these folks going to a 50-plus or a 55-plus is what they want to do right now. That ensures them the opportunity to do that and not worry about the value of their investment and not have to worry about the spectre of having now the place that they consider their home and their haven be turned into a place that potentially is stressful for them and loses equity. That is obviously a concern as well.

I think this is a fantastic piece of legislation. I think it is a long time coming. Certainly, when we talk in general about the Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017, it's one that we in this day and age unfortunately have to pay a lot closer attention to because there are so many elements out there who want to take away those rights from Albertans. I would say that Alberta's NDP is looking to ensure that our Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017, is strong in so many different ways, and we will work at that every day.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Pleased to rise and speak to Bill 23, the Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017. I'd like to start out by thanking the Minister of Justice for putting this bill forward, especially in response to human rights across the country and having a spotlight put onto this very important issue.

I guess I want to frame my comments this morning by just mentioning that, you know, Canadians are guaranteed certain rights under the Charter. For a long time, before we had the bill that's before us today, there were children that were being discriminated against in terms of their age and families and family status. Housing is a human right. And you know what, Madam Chair? Kids are humans, too, and they deserve not to be discriminated against.

You know, we need to also keep our communities whole. When we isolate communities or deprive communities of having families live in those communities, we're missing a large segment of the population that makes our communities what they are. I want to give a specific example in my constituency in terms of housing in Canmore and in Banff. In those two communities in the beautiful Bow Valley housing is at a premium. There's close to a zero per cent vacancy rate, and there are extremely long waiting lists for people to get accommodations, so much so that the landlords are able to charge almost whatever they want in terms of rent because they know that people are limited in terms of their choices. That presents a real challenge because we're seeing that more and more families have to move away from the Bow Valley because of the cost of living there. Even people like nurses and teachers, who earn a decent salary, aren't able to afford the cost of living and the cost of housing in the Bow Valley.

To address some of those concerns, we have invested in creating an affordable housing project in Banff along with the town of Banff and Parks Canada, who generously donated land to the town so that they can build an expanded affordable housing project.

You know, there's this kind of myth or misperception about people in the Bow Valley, that people there are very wealthy. Certainly, there are people who are very wealthy, but the vast majority of people in the Bow Valley just make a living wage. There's nothing wrong with that. Those are the people that we buy our coffee from at Starbucks. They're the people that look after our kids in daycare facilities. Those people need to be in our communities to keep our communities whole.

I'm really proud of the work that the town of Canmore and the town of Banff have done in trying to improve and increase the inventory of affordable housing projects because they recognize the fact that we can't have communities of people that just live there on weekends or use their homes as kind of a second home. There's nothing wrong with that either. But when those tourists come to places like Canmore and Banff, they want to have services available to them. Like, they want to be able to go to Starbucks. They want to go to restaurants. They want to go shopping at the grocery store. So in order to have those communities whole and have those services available, we need to ensure that there are housing spaces available for all ranges of Albertans, from the low end of the income spectrum to the high end. I think this bill, Bill 23, goes a long way to improving the ability of those communities to ensure that their communities can remain whole and have families living in them.

You know, in places like Canmore and Banff space is at a premium. There are land constraints in terms of the footprint of the towns. That's forced these communities to build higher density units and condo buildings. That's not a bad thing. But when we

discriminate against people based on age and the majority of housing stock that's available for families is condominiums, because they're affordable, or rental units, for that same matter, when we look at the stock that's available for them, when we start constraining that stock based on whether you've got a family or you're over 18, it really narrows the range of what's available for people there.

When we take away the ability of rental units to discriminate based on family status, then we expand the housing stock for people. That has a lot of positive effects in terms of affordability because the competition for those spaces – it allows it to be spread out over more people so, you know, people have more chance to access different housing options.

I just want to talk a little bit more in general about why I support this bill, and I just want to maybe go over a couple of the major factors and reasons that the bill was brought before us for consideration today. Bill 23, as most of us know, adds age as a prohibited ground for discrimination to the Alberta Human Rights Act under the areas of tenancy and goods, services, accommodations, or facilities.

Bringing this back to my constituency and the Bow Valley, I think people there really appreciate the 15-year transition period in terms of taking away the adult-only status from buildings because, you know, people put a lot of money into their investments in the Bow Valley. It's a very different real estate market there than the rest of the province because there are a lot of international folks who want to purchase properties there. There's competition both domestically and internationally for those spaces, so when people put a lot of money into their investments – this bill contemplates the 15-year transition period to allow people to get their investments in order and have that time to do what they need to do in terms of the investment that they've made.

9:20

Earlier this year the government of Alberta agreed to a court order to make the changes that we're speaking about today. Age is currently a prohibited ground for discrimination in all areas other than sections 4 and 5 of the act. Section 4 protects against discrimination when any goods, services, accommodation, or facilities normally available to the public are provided. Section 5 prohibits discrimination regarding tenancy, including both commercial and residential rental accommodations.

Madam Chair, this government supports all Albertans, which is why we're proposing to strengthen our current human rights legislation and also further protect Albertans from age discrimination. As has been mentioned here in the Chamber previously, this is a very complex issue that affects many Albertans, and it affects them in different ways depending on the kind of communities that they're living in. Like I mentioned, the Bow Valley has a unique housing circumstance, and no doubt every community has their own unique housing challenges. This bill goes a long way in helping to solve those.

People sometimes ask me: how did we arrive at these rules? Like I said, part of it was in response to a court order, but also over the summer we did undertake a wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders, who have given us many perspectives on this issue. We believe that the proposed amendments in Bill 23 are striking the right balance between the interests of many different groups.

Madam Chair, this legislation will protect programs and activities providing a benefit to minors and seniors such as discounted movie tickets to ensure that they are allowed to continue without violating the act. Doing this will allow more programs and activities to be in financial reach for more people and will create greater opportunities for social interaction. That's what I was saying earlier about

keeping communities whole and having a wide range of diversity within our communities. We are committed to enhancing every Albertan's ability to fully and equally participate in society.

In terms of housing, older Albertans may choose to live together in a community of people at a similar stage in life. Based on our results from the consultations that we undertook over the course of the summer, many Albertans are in favour of allowing the seniors-only housing to continue, and that is exactly what Bill 23 provides for. It also protects the right of seniors to live in seniors-only housing. The amendments set a minimum age for seniors-only housing at 55 or any age older than that. Seniors-only housing would also be required to accommodate within their age restriction special circumstances that are specified in the regulation. This regulation could, for example, address issues such as live-in caregivers.

We also recognize that many Albertans have made significant investments on the basis of condo bylaws in place at the time of purchase, which is what I spoke about earlier. Age-restricted condominiums, if they would like to, can begin a transition period to being seniors-only during that 15-year transition period, so that is another option that's available to folks.

These amendments will immediately apply to rental buildings as soon as the bill comes into force. I think an important distinction to make is between condominiums versus rental buildings in the 15-year transition period. Just to reiterate, the amendments immediately will apply to rental buildings as soon as the bill comes into force whereas age-restricted condominiums are afforded the 15-year transition period. Rental units in condo buildings will also be subject to the same rules as condo buildings except for that 15-year transition period. On a go-forward basis, the only permitted age restriction for rental accommodation would be 55 or older.

Bill 23 also enables ameliorative programs or activities, and this means programs that seek to improve situations for disadvantaged people, including making more inclusive and diverse workplaces. That would be allowed under the bill. An example of that would be youth employment programs. This exception comes with the requirement that the program or activity be reasonably likely to achieve its ameliorative objective. Currently, as we've heard earlier, Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada whose human rights legislation does not provide an exception for ameliorative programs or activities.

If passed, the amendments that we're speaking about today would come into force on January 1, 2018.

Madam Chair, I'd like to conclude my remarks by saying that our government supports all Albertans, and we believe these changes will make life better for them. This bill is an opportunity to embrace the diversity in Alberta and to align our legislation with other jurisdictions across Canada.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I want to start by thanking the minister and her staff for the careful consideration, careful consultations, and the work that have been done on this bill to make sure that we got it right, to make sure that we listened to seniors who were concerned about having to make changes in where they live or how they live, to make sure that we listened to the concerns of families that were finding it a challenge to find rentals or to find condos to buy. I think that the work that has gone on in the bill by the minister and her staff is going to, in the long run, remove some of the concerns and fears that a lot of Albertans

had when they heard that the decision had been made around the need to amend the age restriction in the Alberta Human Rights Act.

It's kind of interesting to me because I grew up in urban cities. Actually, I often say that I grew up in some of the world's biggest urban cities, and I always lived in an apartment in the core of the urban area. In Europe, in big cities like New York City having families live in apartments or condos is something that is normal. That happens all the time. I was kind of concerned when I heard a member opposite saying that it is not the right place for families to grow up in urban areas, living in apartments or in condos, because actually this is a reality for most people and for most families around the world.

We are very fortunate in Canada in having those wide suburban spreads with single-family houses and having all these extra rooms that we don't really use. I remember reading an article about all these what we used to call monster homes in the municipalities where I lived, how they're going to become boarding houses in the future because, really, people have so many extra rooms in their houses.

We've also had a lot of discussions about the challenges around these single-family houses and the way that they've been developed in some of our cities in terms of their cost and in terms of development of roads and, increasingly, around the environment. Living in an urban core such as Edmonton's or Calgary's is a way of life for families, and it's something that's going to happen more and more as places like Edmonton, Sherwood Park, and Calgary are looking at densification and creating more spaces for people to rent or own houses within the urban core. I think that this is really important for us to know, and we shouldn't be thinking that families only want to live in a single-family house in the suburbs.

The other thing that I think is important to know about this bill is that the kind of housing that is developed for seniors is the kind of housing that's perfect for families because both families and seniors need wide open doorways so they can have strollers. They need apartments where the doorways are wide enough, again, for strollers, or they need places that are easy to clean because, as you all know, families, toddlers can damage a carpet very quickly.

I once worked on universal housing guidelines, and I want to reinforce that what's interesting when you talk about universal housing guidelines and when you talk about the need for housing for people who may require a wheelchair or who may require strollers or who have some kind of mobility disability – the universal housing guidelines really address the needs of families, people with disabilities, and seniors. It is really my hope that as this bill comes into force, a lot of developers and housing providers will really adopt the universal housing guidelines. It will make it easier for both families, people with disabilities, and seniors to live in the condos and apartment buildings that they build. So it is my hope that this is going to be a by-product of this bill.

9:30

Now, the other thing that I think we need to know also is that for us to have vibrant communities in our downtown core, the mix of people who live in the downtown core, in the urban areas is very important. It is when you have a mix of seniors, families, and young singles that you create the vibrancy that allows urban cores to survive. Again, I'm really hoping that that bill will really facilitate those vibrant urban cores that we all like, where you have a mix of restaurants, where you have movie theatres, where you have parks, where you can have festivals. The more diversity of people living in an area, the greater the vibrancy is. That's what I hope is also going to be a by-product of this bill.

Now, in Sherwood Park we have a lot of condos. I think that after Edmonton and Calgary the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park

and myself probably have the highest number of condo places in Alberta. I heard a lot from residents. The concerns of the residents really focused on that many of them had bought condos which were designed only for an older age group, and they were concerned that we wanted to have young children that were going to disturb the peace that they have as older adults.

I'm very, very happy that the minister and her staff have taken those concerns and that those people who live in existing older adult buildings, age 55-plus, are assured that this is not going to change. Now, I'm not sure that that's how I'm going to want to live, but I really respect the fact that for a lot of older adults living in a community of similar-minded people is something really important. I want to make sure that all Albertans know that seniors' facilities, seniors-only condos, or, I should probably emphasize, 55-plus condos are not going to change under this act.

Madam Chair, the other thing, too, that I think a lot of older adults were really concerned about is that when you start thinking about it, there are a number of things that older adults benefit from that are age restricted. I often think of the day that I first was able to get a discount at Shoppers Drug Mart because of their 55-plus and the availability to buy discounted movie tickets or access to a lot of things. I want to assure Albertans that this is not something that is going to change under this act because I know some of those things are very important to seniors.

What I think this act will do is it's going to guarantee that families who are struggling to find affordable housing in our urban areas will not be discriminated against. Housing is an expensive part of a family's income. If you're desperate to try to find affordable housing within a city like Edmonton and every time you go and try to find an apartment building they say to you, "I'm really sorry, but we don't want any children in there," not only is it discouraging for these families, but it's really creating undue hardships for these families who really would like to live in the urban core.

Madam Chair, one of the things that I also hope will be a by-product of this bill is the consideration that in having a lot of mixed housing, like mixed condo units and so on, there might be some really good benefits to both families and seniors from living in an area if that's what they choose. I could see an apartment building where there are a number of families and a number of older adults, and then the older adults might maybe choose or be interested in helping with child care or may find ways of supporting younger families, and then those families may also be interested in or become friends with some of the older adults in an apartment building and help them with getting groceries and so on. Living in a mixed apartment building may have unforeseen consequences for these seniors and families.

I wanted to conclude by reminding everyone that if you are living under existing age restrictions, you will be grandparented for a 15-year transition period, and I think that's really important. If you're, for example, in an 18-plus condo, the age-restricted condominiums, if they so wish, can transition to being seniors-only during the 15-year transition period. This is not about kicking people out of their existing housing. This is not about not valuing the investment that people have made in their condo building. This is just about ensuring that families are not discriminated against in finding housing, and it's also about ensuring that our older adults or seniors can stay in age-appropriate condos at the age of 55.

Madam Chair, it is my hope that everyone in this House will vote for this bill. I think it's a bill that has been really balanced and well nuanced by the minister, and it should really help reduce the challenges that many families have in finding housing in the urban core.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this very important bill. I can think of no issue that has generated more letters to the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud than this current situation. Over the last six months I must have received over a hundred letters, all of them very thoughtful and very well crafted, dealing with this issue of establishing a balance between, basically, competing human rights here. I think this bill actually establishes a really nice balance between making sure that seniors who have invested in a particular type of housing can continue to enjoy that lifestyle but also protecting the right of persons with young families to access accommodation that is suitable to them.

I think all members will be familiar with a case that came up six months ago in the city of Edmonton, where a constituent of mine, Michael Janz, became a proud father. He actually at that time was the chair of the Edmonton public school board, and he stepped down from being chair because he wanted to be able to devote the time that's necessary to deal with his new baby. But at the same time he was forced to actually look for different accommodation from where he was living at the time because of an age restriction in that facility, which is actually in my riding.

9:40

I think that this current legislation is going to help deal with that sort of situation, and I know that Michael is very appreciative of the work that the minister and her staff have done to establish this very balanced bill. I think we should all remember that the bill came about because the government agreed last January to basically deal with a human rights complaint about age discrimination against young people and that the ministry has been working hard since that time to deal with that.

It's interesting. There are always unintended consequences of these changes, but in fact the demographic that is most concerned about this change is not the young people and families; it's actually our seniors. It's our seniors who I think we need to be thinking about protecting as well. I think that this bill actually provides an excellent compromise – it's not a compromise – an excellent formulation that protects the rights of all. I can't think of another situation where the competing rights have been so well dealt with.

As is my wont in many of my interjections in the House, I want to bring a historical perspective to this. The concept of human rights actually came out of the devastation and the destruction and the genocide of World War II. Basically, the creation of the United Nations after the Second World War led to a number of positive changes: the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, UNESCO, dealing with refugees. There was also a universal declaration of human rights, and I think this goes back to 1947. This universal declaration of human rights basically mandated individual governments to make sure that their citizens were protected in all forms of human rights, you know: the right to assembly, the right to freedom of religion, the right to free press, the right to live in a healthy environment. There are several of these things.

It took from 1947 until 1960, actually, for that to be enshrined in Canadian law. I'm actually going to give some praise and some props to a conservative, to a Progressive Conservative, which I don't see many of across the way here, named John George Diefenbaker, renegade in power. John George Diefenbaker was the man from Prince Albert, and it was my distinct honour to actually receive a copy of the Canadian Bill of Rights, a framed copy of the

Canadian Bill of Rights, which he actually presented to my junior high school in Neepawa, Manitoba, in 1962. This was the first time I got to shake the hand of a great man or a politician, and I certainly will never forget it.

The Bill of Rights, that John Diefenbaker got passed in 1960, really applied only to the federal statutes. You know, it had some impact, but it wasn't until 1972 when the Constitution of Canada actually had the Charter of Rights and Freedoms incorporated into it. It's actually as a result of that that we're here today talking about making sure that the province of Alberta's human rights legislation complies. It's actually the Supreme Court of Canada, led by a distinguished Albertan, Beverley McLachlin, who has basically transformed the social life of Canada by making sure that the universal declaration of human rights, basically, is applied and enacted in Canada. Now, I know that there are some, perhaps some across the way, that might complain about judicial activism, but in fact this form of judicial review is essential to make sure that we have these human rights.

You know, the gist of this is that we've got to make sure that the province of Alberta's way of dealing with human rights is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Bill of Rights as well as the universal declaration of human rights, and I think that we are achieving that in this legislation. I'm particularly pleased with the fact that people that are currently living in 55-plus housing, in condos at least and in rental accommodations, will be able to continue to enjoy that. There are a variety of these kinds of housing arrangements. It's not just multistorey condominiums. There are communities made up of townhomes, and there are life lease organizations. In any guise, these folks are going to be able to continue with this.

Now, if the age limit is less than that, there is an opportunity for that age limit to actually transform over time to 55-plus. But, most importantly, the proscription of folks living in housing that proscribes people as young as under the age of 18 from living in that is done. That's going to be particularly important in rental accommodations.

We're going to basically protect the programs and activities that benefit both young people and seniors and ensure that they're allowed to continue without violating the act. I will still get my free cheques from my bank because I happen to be over 60. The young person can still get a discount at the movies. Those are two perhaps pedestrian examples of the kinds of balances that have been achieved, but again this legislation, I think, is really doing a good job.

Our job in this Legislature is to make sure that the life of all Albertans is better, and I think that this legislation is particularly good at achieving that. You know, we've consulted on this, and the discussions I've had with the seniors that live in my riding have been very positive. This is really what they were asking for. This is not a threat to their property values, in my opinion. This is not a threat to the way of life that they've come to enjoy and planned for and now can continue to plan their retirement on.

I really think that this is an excellent bill, and I would urge all of my colleagues in the House to fully support it. Thank you.

9:50

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am very pleased to hear all the wonderful comments about this bill, the Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017, which I'm really pleased to see. I mainly would like to speak about some of the examples and some

of the instances I've seen in the last while of people taking advantage of maybe greater flexibility in how people look at age.

For a long time it has been – actually, I go way, way back, to when I was a child – that if you wanted to visit someone in a seniors' facility, you'd feel guilty if you were too young because you were seen as disruptive and noisy, so even a visit would be kind of traumatic. That has changed, obviously, and there are a lot of benefits. There's more flexibility, and more and more people are seeing that having the options to choose different ways of housing is helpful. As the member from Sherwood Park said, what we may think is inappropriate housing for families, for instance apartments, is the norm in a lot of the world. This is just a reality, and it works.

I've got a seniors' accommodation not too far from where I live with an interesting story. It's a very nice building. They had a few empty units during the year, and they wanted to find tenants, but they didn't have seniors, you know, lining up to take them. It's a newish building. It's been renovated. After long discussion they made the decision to offer the tenancy in these empty units to university students. It's in a good location for that; it's walking distance. The units are small, but the price is right. They found tenants, but some of their seniors were apprehensive about what this would mean. Would there be partying and, you know, disruptive noise?

The students that moved in with them were so happy to find a building that they could afford where they could study in the evening. Because there were very few seniors that were making a lot of noise at night, they could just do their studying, do their university work in peace, quiet, and comfort. These seniors started to get to know some of the young people and found it very nice to have people in the building who could do things like help with lifting something if it was needed. They became a lot more acclimatized to each other, realizing that there are a lot of benefits to having mixed-age housing.

Now, that didn't go as far as small children in there, but at some point it could. I know a number of families, as many of us who are in our later years do, who are raising grandchildren. It wasn't in their life plan necessarily, but it happens. It seems to me that they should have as much of a right to have a choice in housing as anyone else, and their grandchildren deserve a good range of choices.

I'm thinking, too, and I've thought for years about some of the interesting configurations that are coming around. One is Baba Yaga housing for seniors. It's set up to be a flexible arrangement for seniors to share a space with somebody in their family who is under the age of 55 yet have the advantages of having some common areas and some companionship when they want it.

And just last on the list I was thinking about various places in Edmonton that have co-op housing. One place I saw was about a city block of houses. The backyard was all joined, with no fences in it. The people living in the houses were all different ranges of ages and configurations. In the backyard they had a garden, a common garden, a play area with a playground for children, and just grassy areas. The people that I knew were seniors living there, and it seemed to me that they were very happy to be in an area, you know, with families. They didn't have to have children under their roof if they didn't want to, but to share a space made so much sense. People who might not have the energy or time or strength to be digging up a garden might be really, really helpful in planting and in taking care of it and, obviously, reaping the benefits.

It's just made me think about how something like this, a human rights amendment bill, helps everyone in making sure that we don't stereotype people, that we don't try to pigeonhole people but give lots of choices. Obviously, with this, it's nicely secured that people who are over the age of 55 who would prefer 55-plus

accommodation will have that option. But many options for many people.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you. First, I wasn't planning on going in this direction, but since the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud brought it up, I too have a copy of the Canadian Bill of Rights. Mine was signed by Diefenbaker. I inherited it from my great-grandfather. He, of course, was a Member of Parliament at the time that the bill was passed and a close friend of Diefenbaker. I have mine in my office as well. I would also like to point out that Diefenbaker's was not the first Bill of Rights in this country. It was, in fact, Tommy Douglas's that was the first Bill of Rights in this country, but that's a bit of a digression.

Getting to the bill, Madam Chair, you know, for a lot of my former co-workers and classmates graduating from university, it was common to then evaluate the housing market and the job market in their field. I heard and still hear so often that the biggest challenge for many of my colleagues and former colleagues is that all of the housing that they can afford is age restricted. Even with the ones that are just 18-plus, their concern then becomes: "Well, what if I have kids? I don't want to have to pack up and move just because I decided to start a family." Instead, they end up looking for cheaper options, which usually means paying mom and dad rent. This, of course, factors into a rather harsh stereotype of people in my generation, that nobody is working and that everybody is living at home, neither of which is true, but that is nonetheless the stereotype that my generation ends up with.

This bill helps to address that in ensuring that there is access to housing, not just affordable housing but, really, all levels of housing, and helps to provide those spaces for, particularly, younger people but also, you know, people in their 40s and helps to make sure that they have access to housing that they really need, more often than not in a place that they want to be in. There are many young families in my community, and quite often they would prefer to be in a condo situation because it's a bit cheaper in some parts of the constituency, but they can't move into that space because it's got an age restriction on it, and they can't bring their kids in. That's a very serious concern, you know, not having access to housing because of your children, so I'm very happy to see this bill come forward.

The other side of this, of course, and one that many of my constituents have reached out to me on is that they are concerned that seniors' housing will be impacted. You know, these are often people who have worked their entire life, they've retired, and the last thing they want to have to deal with is somebody else's grandkids running around at who knows what time of day. It's just not the relaxing experience that they're looking for. So they were very concerned that a move in this direction would force them to allow – I actually had some people reach out to me, and they were concerned that there would be age quotas in place. I don't know where they got that idea from.

10:00

It's good to see that there's a balance here, that 55-plus residences are still allowed, and even some of the current facilities that wouldn't match a 55-plus will be grandfathered in over a number of years. I'm assuming that the vast majority of facilities will interpret that as: "Okay. If we have some younger members, they can remain or even move in if they're within the right age

range. As those people age, then we'll bring in the age restriction when everybody is 55-plus." That seems to be a fair path in this direction. I'm really happy to see that, and I'm happy to see that there is this balance in making sure that there is access to housing for all Albertans but also that there is the balance between allowing for seniors' housing and 55-plus housing and really helping to support all of those Albertans.

I'd like to thank the minister for the bill. I know there was a lot of feedback leading up to this. Certainly, in my office alone I think we've had something like 50 letters on this topic. It's good to see that all of that was taken into consideration and that there's a good balance in this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. It's my pleasure to also rise and chat briefly about this legislation. What sort of struck me, hearing it over and over again, you know, when we're talking about this legislation, is that currently Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada whose human rights legislation does not provide an exemption for ameliorative programs or activities. Sadly, I find myself saying this again and again and again. It seems like we've had to address a number of problems, a number of issues that the previous government was not willing to take on. Anyway, we're in cleanup, catch-up mode.

I, too, was visited by many, many, many, many people in St. Albert and probably every day received mail on this subject. There was a particular group in St. Albert that was very active and busy coming to see us, and they're called Seniors United Now. I'm sure other people have heard of them. There is a St. Albert chapter, and they are very, very good about advocating for seniors.

Now, particularly in St. Albert there's sort of a unique issue around housing. Although it is a wealthy community, they certainly have their problems around housing. There's also, believe it or not, a homelessness problem in St. Albert. What I was hearing from the Seniors United Now group was that they wanted to do everything in their power to keep St. Albertans in St. Albert, so that meant addressing some problems or deficits in housing. Certainly, they were concerned about being allowed to have housing units or housing, I guess, communities that were specifically for seniors, and that legislation dealt with that beautifully.

I think it also dealt with the transition period for condo complexes that wish to do that. I think 15 years is very generous and allows for a healthy transition. The Seniors United Now group was really good about linking the need for stable housing and addressing poverty, and poverty among seniors, no matter where they live, sadly, is an issue. They did address that, and, you know, I was appreciative about their comments.

I think this legislation does a great job with live-in caregivers. You know, we talk a lot about aging in place, and it's vital. It's vital for people to be able to stay in their homes as long as possible. When people are in their communities that they're familiar with, that they feel safe in, where their friends are, where their families are, it's a winning situation all around. People are safer. People live healthy lives. I think that making that exception or addressing the need for live-in caregivers was essential.

[Mr. Dach in the chair]

Obviously, you know, it's sad that it's 2017 and we are only just now doing this, but I am thankful that our government has taken the time to address this important legislation because it was put off for

a very long time, for far too long. We've seen over and over again what happens in communities where people are excluded.

I'm very thankful that in St. Albert in the last year there were very progressive councillors, and many of them are back. We've elected some new councillors that are also very progressive, that have looked at streamlining processes around licensing for people with disabilities that want to live in communities. Again, it was because there's some old legislation in place or old bylaws that require letters to go out to neighbours so that a person with a disability can move into a community. I'm sure you all know the acronym NIMBY, not in my backyard, but it applies here, too. I'm very, very happy that this legislation is setting a new tone and a new direction that children are welcome – they should not be excluded – that families are welcome. Any time you have diversity in a community, it's just going to add to that community.

You know, I had a single-family home for many years when I was raising my children – they're both out on their own, well, sort of; let's be honest; I still help them out; I think we all probably do – but I downsized and bought a condo. I bought a small condominium, and that was sort of a new way of living for me. I'd always had my own space, but you're forced to share, in an apartment-style condo, with people above you, people you share walls with. I'll tell you that I absolutely love the fact that my condo association is inclusive. There are three buildings in my complex, and we have people that are clearly from all walks of life. There are young families. There are older people. There are people with disabilities. I see an adapted van, actually, that parks just out in front of my condo, and I'm thrilled to see this person. Whether he's going to work, I'm not sure. But I have an accessible complex. I have families; I have children.

I'll tell you that there is a rental unit above me, and I know this because it changes fairly regularly. Most other people, I think, around me have been the same people for the last nine years or so. I can tell when they change, and I'll tell you that when a family rents and moves in, I'm thrilled. No offence to younger people that have roommates that move in – you know, I was young myself once and likely made bad decisions like they do, with their parties and goings-on. I have come to appreciate some of their music because it is loud enough that I can hear it.

Mr. Malkinson: Expanding your horizons.

Ms Renaud: Absolutely.

But I always am very thankful when it's a young family or a family that moves in as opposed to maybe people that meet, you know, a different requirement. I'm thankful to live there because I learn something from the people around me. I love the fact that the people that live in my condominium are not restricted, so I am, again, very thankful.

I'm thankful to the minister for the way that concerns were included in this legislation, I'm thankful for the time that she took to consult with people to address needs that are very real and very current for all Albertans, and I'm thankful that our government has taken a stand and decided to address things that other governments or the previous government chose to let slide for far too long.

Thank you. I look forward to supporting this legislation.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Any other speakers to Bill 23? The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 23, Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017. Of course, this bill is in response to a court order resulting from a constitutional challenge filed in the courts in March 2016, the

challenge being that the exclusion of age as a prohibited ground of discrimination violated the nondiscrimination provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

10:10

As a result, Bill 23 will add age as a prohibited ground of discrimination in section 4, regarding goods and services, and section 5, regarding tenancy, in the Alberta Human Rights Act while addressing the complex issue of balancing the interests of all Albertans that put their opinion forward through the large consultation process that was undertaken by our government.

Mr. Chair, over the last several months I've had the opportunity to consult on this issue with the Edmonton-Meadowlark community as there are many people living in the community that are staying in seniors-only housing restricted to those who are 55 years of age or older, and I do want to take a moment to thank all of them for taking the time to share their thoughts and concerns. I do believe that Bill 23, put forward by the Minister of Justice, strikes the right balance between keeping our communities family friendly while addressing the concerns of those who wish to age in place in a home which is adaptable to their needs.

As we age, we may choose to live together in communities of people at a similar stage in life. Bill 23 will protect the rights of seniors to live in seniors-only housing restricted to those 55 years of age or older. Through our consultation we heard that many Albertans are in favour of allowing this seniors-only housing to continue. There will also be opportunities within the regulations to allow special circumstances that will address complexities like live-in caregivers.

From the conversations that I've had, the main concern for those who are advocating for family-friendly communities is the properties that currently exist that restrict rental or ownership to those who are 18 years of age or older and not necessarily our older population, which we especially see within our downtown community. These existing age restrictions will be grandfathered over a 15-year transition period for those condominiums who wish to become seniors-only – this includes those buildings that are 18-plus or 45-plus now – while rental buildings that do not wish to make this transition will be subject to these new amendments as soon as this legislation passes.

I think it's important to note that this legislation will not restrict programs and activities providing a benefit to minors or seniors such as store discounts. Doing this will ensure we aren't negatively impacting the opportunities for social interaction or savings for those in our communities.

Once again I would like to take a moment to thank the Edmonton-Meadowlark community, who took the opportunity to share their thoughts on this legislation at quite a few round-tables, actually, throughout the last few months, as well as the Child-Friendly Housing Coalition and the many other organizations that are working to make our communities more inclusive while recognizing the importance of those who want to age in place with proper accommodations.

I believe that what has been brought forward strikes the right balance and ensures a more vibrant, inclusive community that will offer young families more opportunities in the housing market while ensuring our seniors have the opportunity to adapt their homes to their needs as they age in place.

Through our consultations on the proposed amendments we saw support from the Government Advocacy Committee from the northern chapter of the Canadian Condominium Institute as well as from the Alberta Association of Seniors Centres and the acting director of education and engagement at the Alberta Human Rights Commission, among many others.

With that, I would just once again like to thank the Minister of Justice for her thorough consultation process. I do believe that Bill 23 strikes the right and a fair balance for all Albertans. I'm happy to stand in support of it, and I hope that all of my colleagues will do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much. As Minister of Seniors and Housing I'm proud to stand in support of this bill, which will address an important issue facing seniors across Alberta, ageism. Ageism is discrimination based on biases and stereotypes about people because of their age. Amending the Human Rights Act to prohibit age discrimination is vitally important to addressing this problem. Two-thirds of seniors across Canada say that they have been treated unfairly because of their age. I have had the opportunity to travel across this province to meet with seniors and to talk to them about the challenges that they face, and I know that ageism is a barrier for far too many seniors in this province.

Seniors built this province, they sewed the fabric of our society, and they continue to contribute significantly to all of our communities. Seniors in Alberta are active. They contribute more volunteer hours than in any other province in Canada. Seniors continue to be leaders and mentors, employees and employers, our colleagues, our friends, and our family. Their contribution should be valued and celebrated, and they should not face discrimination based on their age.

This summer we held the inaugural minister's Seniors Advisory Forum, where representatives from seniors' groups and senior-serving groups gathered to discuss and share their expertise about how this province can better serve senior Albertans. One of the most important issues they identified was the need to address and prevent ageism. Many noted that we must reduce the stigma around aging. I heard at the Seniors Advisory Forum that Alberta can provide leadership in preventing ageism. The importance of this amendment in that effort cannot be underestimated. Seniors built this province, and it is so important that we challenge negative perceptions about them.

Our government has taken other important steps to ensure that seniors do not face discrimination. Just recently we provided support to an initiative in Calgary, led by the Brenda Strafford Foundation, to educate and train communities and local businesses on how to recognize and serve people with dementia.

We're also investing significantly to expand seniors' affordable housing in our province, and we are building new lodges and new seniors' apartments. We're also investing in maintenance, which previously had been ignored, to make sure that existing facilities are safe and comfortable for residents.

I was also proud to declare October 1, 2017, International Day of Older Persons. It was long overdue for Alberta to join this important United Nations initiative.

These are just some of the ways that we are making Alberta a province that doesn't discriminate against seniors. Amending the Human Rights Act is the next step. I've heard from seniors all across Alberta, and I could not be more proud to stand in support of Bill 23. This bill will make life better for Albertans. It will help build a province where no one faces discrimination or persecution because of their age. I strongly encourage everyone to support this bill as well.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other speakers to Bill 23? The Member for Calgary . . .

Mr. Malkinson: Currie.

The Acting Chair: Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll remind you where I'm from next time you come and sit down here.

You know, I'm happy to come up here and speak to this particular bill. We've had a very fulsome debate on Bill 23. This bill came as a result of a court challenge. The court gave the government until January 6, 2018, to bring forward these regulations which the Minister of Justice has brought forward.

Now, as a result of this court action, I found that in my riding – this is one of those examples where I'm not sure where it came from – there seemed to be initially a lot of misinformation after the court date. After going around in my riding talking to many seniors' groups and constituents, I'm going to give the Coles Notes version of what you need to know about this bill.

Many seniors in my riding thought that they were going to have their building changed so that they couldn't have the 55-plus restriction anymore. That is not true. This bill does not change that.

There was concern that perhaps the building wouldn't be able to put in reasonable restrictions that are allowed under the condo act. That is also, in fact, not true.

There was a concern that this court judgment would prevent discounts that businesses perhaps provide to seniors or children. Again, this bill and this court judgment do not do that.

Lastly, some people thought that this would come into force immediately, so those who owned an 18-plus building but not a 55-plus building would somehow have that taken out of their condo bylaws right away. That is also not the case. This bill provides for a 15-year transition period for those condo buildings that are currently an 18-plus but not a 55-plus building to transition off that or to transition to a 55-plus building.

With that, Mr. Chair, those are my comments. I think that hopefully provides a couple of Coles Notes for concerns that my constituents have brought up to me about this particular bill. I'll be voting in support of it. I think it is excellent that we'll be able to remove some of these restrictions, especially in the rental market, for those with families or those who are young adults who are just getting out into the world to be able to fully access the rental market and housing in all of our cities and towns and villages throughout Alberta.

With that, thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

10:20

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I continue to be proud to be a member of this government, that when we identify issues around human rights, we move to identify them as promptly as possible, obviously, by working in consultation with Albertans. This move to support all Albertans, to strengthen Alberta's human rights legislation is certainly something I'm very happy to support.

Clearly, it is a very complex issue, and I'm thankful that our minister took great care to find the right balance between the many Albertans that could be affected by this legislation. I feel that that balance was reached through broad consultation to hear a wide variety of perspectives.

My colleagues have spoken quite eloquently about how the minister mitigated the impacts for seniors and how important it is for us to continue to support and value the contributions that seniors have made to this province throughout their lifetimes. I'm very thankful that we found that right balance for them.

However, Mr. Chair, I also wanted to take an opportunity as the Minister of Children's Services to talk about children and the impact that this has for children and families. I've been doing some very broad consultation around early learning and child care and what it takes for us as a society and as a culture to support learning and growth and development and nurturing of our children in order to support them to meet their full potential as individuals. What I heard from Albertans from right across the province is that what they want in order to raise children is to have that broad community involvement in the lives of children. It's certainly a very well-used saying to say that it takes a village to raise a child, but that saying is used often because it is quite true. Clearly, children are the future of this province, and we need to do everything we can to make them feel supported and connected to their communities.

Part of that is ensuring that they are surrounded by a wide variety of people and communities. A sociologist named Matthew Desmond from the United States states: "Home is where children find safety and security, where we find our identities, where citizenship starts. It usually starts with believing you're part of a community, and that is essential to having a stable home." Mr. Chair, we make life better and richer for our children when they have the opportunity to be in communities where they're surrounded by a wide variety and a broad variety of individuals. That diversity supports not only the development of children; it supports the families who are raising those children, it enhances our communities, and in fact I think it makes it a better community.

I'm really thankful that, again, we continue to make life better through the work that we do as a government, and I do think that this bill will do so for all of us. We will continue to protect and value our seniors, but we also will support children and families to do the very best they can to ensure that the future of this province is brighter than it ever has been before.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to stand up in this House and speak to the bills that we have before us. Of course, debate is the most important part of our democratic process. Being able to be in this House and debate the laws that we have in front of us and make sure that everybody has the opportunity to talk to the bills that we have in front of us: well, that's essential. You know, I'm glad that many of my colleagues have risen in this House to speak particularly to this bill because, of course, what else could be more important than the human rights of the citizens of this fine land?

I think that it's really important for us to acknowledge that within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms it specifically states, in section 7, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person." It's this phrase, security of the person, which is so important because – I mean, we can look at it and be like: "Okay. Well, what does that mean, security of the person?" Luckily, we've had courts within this country and in this province go into great detail about the security of the person.

Often when we talk about human rights – and I'm so glad that my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud brought up the universal declaration of human rights – people tend to focus on the freedoms:

well, I have the freedom to do this, and I have the freedom to do that, and I have the freedom over here to do these things. Yes, those are absolutely essential and important. Those freedoms are important. But often we overlook equality rights. We don't focus on them as much or even on the collective rights, for example, to housing, health care, and education. We don't stress those enough. I feel proud to be part of a government that tries to strike the appropriate balance when it comes to all of these types of rights, right?

I'm also proud to be part of a government that has consistently since taking office focused on bringing bills before this House that aid in a poverty reduction strategy. Now, it may seem a stretch but not to me. I think that this particular bill is addressing an important part of that poverty reduction strategy, and that is housing for the citizens of this fine land, again, one of the collective rights that we should be focusing on as a Legislature to make sure that our citizens have those rights. I will repeat them: health care, education, and housing. Now, why is housing so important? Well, if you look at the social determinants of health, it all begins there. If we want to have more healthy, prosperous people within this province, we need to make sure that people are housed appropriately, that we have affordable housing, that we make sure that everybody has access to that housing. That's why this bill is so important.

Part of the poverty reduction strategy that has been so important, that we've brought forward, of course, is An Act to End Predatory Lending. I just wanted to highlight that quickly because that's also associated with this. We found that people who are low-income are living paycheque to paycheque and were severely being taken advantage of by predatory lending practices here in this province. I'm so glad that we brought a bill to put an end to that. That's how it's associated with this particular bill.

I want to thank the minister and her department for taking an enormous amount of time to consult with a wide variety of stakeholders on this particular issue. That consultation process has led to the bill that we have before us.

Of course, I go back to this whole concept that we need to strike a balance. So often you will have individuals on one side of an argument, and they'll be making particular arguments about how something is black, and then you'll have other people on the other side of the argument making great arguments for how something is white. But we realize that there's a whole lot of grey in between. It is how we apply the laws in that grey area and make sure that the rights of all our citizens are respected that is how – we need to focus on how we make legislation here within this House. It's not about going to those extremes; it's about making sure that one citizen's right doesn't overcome someone else's. It's about striking that balance, where we need to be, making sure that everyone has that opportunity.

10:30

Now, of course, it's been mentioned by several of my colleagues here that we're responding to the court challenge and that we're trying to do our very best to make sure that there is no age discrimination here in the province of Alberta and particularly when it comes to housing. But I wanted to stress that Bill 23 will protect the rights of seniors to live in seniors-only housing. This is where I go into the balance that we struck. The amendment sets the minimum age for seniors-only housing at 55 or any age older than that, and seniors-only housing would also be required to accommodate within their age restriction special circumstances that are specified in the regulation. This regulation could, for example, address issues such as live-in caregivers, which several of my colleagues have brought up.

Mr. Chair, we also recognize that many Albertans have made significant investments on the basis of their condo bylaws at the place and time of purchase. We want to ensure that Albertans affected by the amendments have advance notice before the changes impact their condominiums. Existing age restrictions in condominiums will be grandparented for a 15-year transition period so that they do not violate section 4 of the act. This is the balance that we're striking within this bill. Age-restricted condominiums, if they wish, can transition to being seniors-only during that 15-year transition period.

Currently Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada whose human rights legislation does not provide an exception for ameliorative programs or activities. This is what this bill hopes to address.

Mr. Chair, our government supports all Albertans, and these particular changes will make life better for them as we continue to address poverty-reduction strategies in our province with the legislation that we're presenting in this House, trying to strike that balance. I highly encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members who wish to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Calgary . . .

Hon. Members: Hawkwood.

The Acting Chair: Hawkwood. Thank you.

Connolly: It's just more fun to let you look.

Thank you very much, Chair. I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 23. I've had the pleasure of hearing from hundreds of my constituents about this bill in particular, and I'm happy to say that this bill strikes the right balance. They told me that they wanted their seniors' housing and senior-living condos to be protected, so I'm very glad that this bill will permit age restrictions for seniors-only accommodations at 55 years or older. Our government is listening to seniors, and I'm proud to have been able to bring their concerns, the concerns of the seniors in my riding, to the minister and have their concerns met. As their representative it's my honour and duty to bring their comments and ideas to the forefront, and I cannot thank them enough for coming to me with their ideas so I could fight on their behalf.

Age will finally be added as a prohibited ground of discrimination to the Alberta Human Rights Act for all of the Alberta Human Rights Act. As one of the youngest members of this House I'm proud to stand alongside my colleagues to support all Albertans, young and old. Once again, these proposed amendments will strike the right balance between the interests of many different groups, so I am proud to stand in support.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm really pleased to hear the debate today and the wide array of support for this legislation. I just do want to point out a couple of inconsistencies that people may want to be aware of. You know, folks across the way have often talked about being free-enterprising Albertans, and I think that when it comes to housing and human rights, we have to tread very carefully in terms of using words like "free enterprising" and the "free market." Sometimes the free market needs a little bit of a helping hand in terms of making sure people have their human

rights met. Human rights aren't for sale, and they're nonnegotiable, and sometimes governments need to intervene in strategic and very careful ways in the marketplace in order to ensure that those human rights are met.

Earlier this morning I talked about the housing situation in Banff and Canmore. You know, that housing market was left up to the free market, with some minor government interventions in terms of local bylaws in Canmore about the need to work in the valley. Also, in Banff there's a very special provision in the incorporation agreement for the municipality of Banff, and that is that in order for people to be able to live in Banff, there's what's called a need-to-reside clause. That's to ensure and prevent against people perhaps purchasing a home – of course, any land in Banff is leased land, so you don't actually own the land, but you own the home. The need-to-reside clause in Banff is meant to prevent against people coming in and purchasing properties and taking away that housing stock from people who need those homes to live and work in the town of Banff.

The town of Banff's primary mandate as a municipality is to serve tourists. There was an incorporation agreement signed with Parks Canada. Banff and Jasper are very unique municipalities within Canada and especially within Alberta in that these municipalities are located within national parks, and they've got a very particular mandate in terms of why they are allowed to be municipalities. So when we look at government intervention in terms of ensuring there is adequate housing to keep communities whole, places like Banff, Canmore, and Jasper are perfect examples of why we need to massage the rules in order to ensure that housing stock isn't taken up by people who just want to use those properties as vacation properties.

Certainly, that's a legitimate use, and there's nothing wrong with using a property as that, well, except, of course, in Banff, where you must reside in order to own a property. There's nothing wrong with owning a home as a cottage or a second home or a vacation home, but we can't lose sight of the fact that communities need all sorts of people in them. It's the diversity that makes us stronger. You know, we have much more in common than we have differences, but those differences that we have make us stronger. Having a wide array of families and communities and also all sorts of social spectrums and having a wide variety of people in our communities is what makes them better. This bill goes a long way to ensuring we have the ability to have that diversity. People can still have their vacation homes, but we also have adequate stock of housing for people to enjoy living in a community and something that they can afford.

I'm really proud of our government for proceeding with this bill. It's long overdue. I think it's going to benefit people across the province but especially so in communities where housing is at a premium – it may be difficult to find affordable housing – and where wait-lists are long. Let's face it. Alberta is a great place to live and to raise a family. People want to come here. They see what our lifestyle is and see how great this province is, and they want to move here. Jobs are returning to the province. When people come here, they need a place to live, and they need a place that they can afford. They also need a place where they can raise a family, whether that be in a downtown condo or an apartment building or in the suburbs in a single-family home. People should have the ability to make those choices, and when we remove the restrictions of things like age discrimination, it gives people a lot more choices.

Again, I'd like to encourage everybody to support the bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

10:40

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 23?

Are you ready for the question on Bill 23, the Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017?

[The clauses of Bill 23 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 25

Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017

The Acting Chair: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to speak to Bill 25 this morning, the Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017, in Committee of the Whole. This bill is all about our government listening to Albertans. When forest professionals passed resolutions to merge their various regulatory bodies into one organization in 2014, they knew what was best for their industry and their professions. To honour the vote and the direction that those organizations had taken, we are following through on our commitment to listen and respond to that expertise.

Mr. Chair, there are about 1,600 professionals who identify either as a forester or a technologist. Over 90 per cent of both organizations that currently regulate those professions voted in favour of merging prior to approaching government to officially request legislative changes. In other words, this merger was their idea.

The two organizations came together in 2015 and have been sharing office space and a new name ever since. Passing Bill 25, basically, Mr. Chair, will make it official. Alberta Labour has worked closely with both organizations and has consulted them regularly on the details of those proposed changes. Their request has the strong support of the Alberta Forest Products Association, which is the voice for the forest products industry.

I had the opportunity this past September to join the Alberta Forest Products Association at their annual general meeting in Jasper. I believe that the MLA for West Yellowhead was there as well. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation at the time, and the Member for Edmonton-Manning were also there, and there might have been another one of our MLAs. I know that the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti was there as well because he is a strong supporter of the forestry industry. It was very informative for me to attend the AFPA annual general meeting. The forestry industry is doing the best they can to ensure that they've got a sustainable business model moving forward and are very conscientious about protecting the environment.*

Also, I think one of the highlights, actually, of the AGM, from my perspective, was that the ambassador for the softwood lumber issue for Alberta, Gary Doer, came for the AGM on the final day of the conference. You know, I'm really proud of the work that Gary Doer is doing. He is the right man for the job, and he has an extremely impressive background and pedigree for doing the work that he's done.

You know, he told the audience that one of the most important things about being an ambassador is the relationships that we make. One of his pieces of advice to us was: make relationships first and negotiate later because, especially from his perspective, Americans

*See page 1819, right column, paragraph 1

really like to get to know people on a personal level before they start talking business. That was very important advice. That kind of thing comes naturally to some people, but sometimes it's also nice to explicitly state the tried-and-true techniques on relations and negotiations and how we can be more successful to advance our interests. Gary was saying that we need to relate first and negotiate second. That way people understand where you're coming from and how important this topic is to our various economies.

You know, the housing market in the U.S. is dependent upon having affordable lumber to build their homes, and Canada has a robust forestry stock and a very healthy forestry industry. We can support each other's economies in mutually beneficial ways, so it's so important that we have someone like Gary and also, frankly, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, who have done an incredible amount of work on the softwood lumber issue and have made efforts and are making those ties with our trading partners to ensure that when we're having these discussions about NAFTA and softwood lumber, it's so important that we really understand how many jobs are dependent on those trading relationships and that they mutually benefit each economy.

I sit on a committee for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade where we meet with U.S. state legislators, and, you know, we've learned that products cross the border many, many times, and each time it crosses the border between the U.S. and Canada, value is added and jobs are created. Again, it's imperative that we understand what's at stake when we're talking about softwood lumber and NAFTA and those kinds of things.

You know, getting back to the forestry profession, I would like to thank, again, my hon. colleague from West Yellowhead, who spoke in support of the bill yesterday and moved second reading on behalf of the Minister of Labour. There are those who might wonder if the scope of practice for forestry professionals remains the same after the merger, so people sometimes ask: what does this actually mean for foresters and these professionals?

For starters, merging the two organizations into one body would eliminate any confusion around the two organizations, that provide essentially the same services. To make things simpler, the professions governing regulations would also be consolidated from three to one. We talk in the House about reducing red tape and regulatory burdens. Well, this bill is a perfect example of what it means to be reducing red tape, taking regulations away, and giving organizations like these regulatory organizations the tools that they need to function more effectively and more efficiently. This is going to save both organizations valuable resources, time, and money that are otherwise being directed at running two various organizations. The amendment would also improve the administrative and disciplinary processes to be more modern and efficient without sacrificing the principles of fairness.

You know, as a registered nurse I do understand the professional regulatory process fairly well in terms of the disciplinary process and what it means to keep your professional credentials and be proud of the work that you do as a regulated professional, and foresters are no different. One of the things the public likes to know about these regulatory organizations is that their members are held to a high standard, and what it means to be a self-regulating profession is that foresters regulate other foresters, just like nurses regulate other nurses, doctors, the same kind of thing.

Part of that regulation of members in a profession has to deal with the complaint process. Members of the public want to know that if there is a complaint against a member for acting unprofessionally, they are going to be held accountable. That's one of the key parts of regulations of professionals. There's a lot at stake. You know, people invest a lot of money in their education to become a

regulated professional like a forester, a nurse, doctor, social worker, that kind of thing. Besides doing what's right, people have another kind of motivation to do what's right because they know that if they make a mistake, they could be taken before a complaints board and they could potentially lose their licence.

10:50

So there's a lot at stake for these professionals. That's why the public has a lot of faith in the work that they do. They know that these professionals are held to this high standard. There are consequences if they make a mistake. You know, doing the right thing is reward in and of itself, but doing the right thing to make sure you avoid penalties is another motivation as well.

Speaking of the complaints process, complaints that are levied against a member would move to a central governing committee. Currently they are relying on a single individual. The number of people on the committee would also increase. That would allow for work to be shared among members, creating administrative efficiencies.

The membership would continue to consist of the many industry professionals but now would also include members of the public who are residents of Alberta. That is common, Mr. Chair, amongst other regulatory bodies. There are members of the public so that they can witness and take part and have a voice and a vote in these regulatory bodies. The public members would add a level of oversight and public accountability that previously wasn't represented in these various organizations.

The amendments would also allow the committee to continue an investigation into a complaint even though a complaint has been withdrawn or settled. Such an action, when warranted, would allow the committee to conduct further investigations if there are repeated offences by one member, better serving the public interest.

Mr. Chair, by consolidating these organizations into one governing body, there will be a strong and unified voice for our forestry professionals, the creation of one regulatory body, removing confusion around the two organizations offering the same services, and the consolidation of the professions' governing legislation to an act supported by a single regulation as opposed to the three current regulations, making things easier for government.

The amendments being proposed were requested by both organizations, as I've mentioned, and they've had the opportunity to review the changes. They're supportive, and they're excited to get this done.

I had the opportunity along with my colleague from West Yellowhead, the Minister of Labour, and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to meet the members of these various organizations when the bill was given first reading earlier this week, and they are enthusiastically supportive of this. They've been waiting a long time. They've been doing excellent work. They've been working closely ever since they voted back in 2014.

I'd like to thank them for the work that they do. I would like to thank them for the patience that they demonstrated. While it has taken some time to act on the request that they've made of the government, now we're here. We're in Committee of the Whole. We have the opportunity to listen to the voice of these forestry professionals and do what they've been asking for. As such, I would like to ask all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of the bill.

Thank you for listening.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's pleasure to rise today in support of the Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017, in the Committee of the Whole today. Like we've already said, what is being amended in the act? The act is being amended to merge the two regulatory colleges, the College of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists. It'll make one regulatory organization, and the name Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals is what they're going to be called.

You can ask the question: why are we doing this? Why are we amending the act? Well, both colleges asked the government to make these changes way back in 2014, and we're doing that with this act. The stakeholders are very supportive of this amendment. They asked for these changes and they were consulted when we put these amendments together and when the amendments were also drafted.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Will the act change the scope of forest management professionals? No, it won't. The scope of practice for forestry professionals will remain as it is now.

I'll just go over some of the things that the forestry professionals cover out in the forest. The forestry professional applies scientific principles, learnings, and practices to forests and forest products and integrated management of forest land itself. Examples of activities include the creation and administration of programs to address inventory, appraisal, evaluation. Of course, they oversee harvesting that goes on out on a land base; renewal, which involves planting of new trees and all those kinds of things; conservation, which also includes looking at issues that affect wildlife.

I mentioned reclamation of the sites. Roads, all those kinds of things fall into that category of reclamation.

Protection and management planning. A large part of that, too, is also including teaching and research. The research is always evolving. Maybe there are things that they could do better out on the land base. The research, like I said, is always related to forest land.

These professionals are either a forest technologist or a forester. Like I said yesterday, there is a difference. Foresters have a degree whereas forest technologists have a diploma or certificate. It's important to understand a little bit of the difference between the two.

The bottom line is that our government is committed to ensuring that professional regulatory organizations continue to serve and protect the well-being, safety, and public interests of all Albertans. That's the important part of this. Like we've all said, the proposed amendments will create a single regulatory entity with increased administrative efficiencies, which is important today, and an expedited disciplinary process that will save the organization time and money, and that's important when we look at that. The colleges of foresters and forest technologists, like we said, have asked for this, and we are acting upon their request.

By consolidating these organizations into one governing body, there will be a strong and unified voice for our forest professionals, which is important when we look at dealing with the forestry issues today. Creating one regulatory body will remove marketplace confusion around two organizations offering the same service, so there will be less repetition and overlap on the services that either organization provides. Consolidating the professions' governing legislation to an act supported by a single regulation as opposed to three regulations, which we have now, would make it easier for government.

I know that we have stated that there were two regulations that were amalgamated into one, but there was one other one that we haven't mentioned today, and I'll do that. The names of the three regulations that will be amalgamated into one regulation: one is the registered professional foresters regulation, the other one is the registered professional forest technologists regulation, and the expenses and review fees regulation. All these will be amalgamated into one. The proposed name of the new regulation has yet to be determined, but it's suggested maybe that it could be registered forest management professional regulation.

11:00

As was mentioned by my colleague for Banff-Cochrane, the fact is that now we're going to be appointing the public to oversee some of the processes on the new council. Public appointments will follow a competency-based recruitment process to make sure that the process is fair and transparent. All appointments will be approved by cabinet, and for public appointments a recruitment plan will be developed in the new year. The needs will be identified, how many public members will be needed.

Public members may sit on the tribunal or other subcommittees, but as with other members appointed by the association, there will be restrictions on sitting on multiple committees considering a matter. The whole idea here is about a committee member that hears a matter while at the same time sitting on another committee that could possibly review the decisions of another. They want to prevent overlap and those kinds of issues.

Merging the two organizations into one body would eliminate, like I said, marketplace confusion around the two organizations that provide the same service. They both do that. To make it easier for government, the profession-governing regulations would be consolidated, like I had mentioned, from three to one. This will save both organizations valuable resources in time and money, which is very important today. The amendment would also improve administrative and disciplinary processes to be more modern and efficient without sacrificing principles of fairness.

That being said, I urge all members to support this bill as it's very important and is supported by the two organizations. In view of that, I ask everybody to support this.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. You get that right consistently.

Well, it's my pleasure to rise in the House this morning and speak to Bill 25, Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017. I'm going to speak in favour of this legislation. I think this is one of the easier decisions we need to make as an Assembly. I think that because the evidence, on balance, is so much in favour of allowing this bill to go through, this is something that we really ought to expect unanimous consent for. Why is that? Well, I mean, as my hon. colleagues have pointed out, this was supported by a very wide margin of both professional foresters and forest technologists. To get 90 per cent on a merger vote is quite a feat and not something that I've seen . . .

Mr. Yao: We've succeeded at that.

Mr. Piquette: I'm sorry?

Mr. Yao: Over 90 per cent for a merger.

Mr. Piquette: Oh, yeah. Not quite that merger, Member. Of course, you know, a lot of people could make a mistake at the same time, too, right? But not in this situation, definitely.

The Deputy Chair: Just a reminder to all members in the House: if you could please speak through the chair, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Piquette: My apologies, Madam Chair. I will do that.

Now, I know that the hon. Member for West Yellowhead pointed out just how much the scope of practice for the two professions overlaps. I mean, they have so many synergies that's it's no surprise they were able to get such a high percentage of support.

This actually speaks also to the code of ethics that both professions are committed to follow. They both speak very clearly to the central importance that both these professions find in managing our forest resources in the public interest and in advocating, you know, for strong forestry management practices. Of course, this is something that their expertise has helped us to do quite successfully and sustainably for many decades now, so it's a credit to them, and I think it's also a real credit to the leadership of these organizations that they found this way forward for these types of savings.

It's often very tempting, when you're in these types of groups, to try to protect your own turf, to build little empires for yourselves. I mean, that tends to be how you can, you know, get more for yourself and not worry so much about the other person. It takes broad-minded individuals to reach beyond their particular silos and to bring people together to the benefit of not only themselves but the public at large, which is what the consolidation of these organizations represents.

You know, I think this is something that actually speaks very closely to a philosophy that our government has used in its approach to other areas, in particular the Municipal Government Act amendments, where the intermunicipal collaborative framework agreements are actively seeking those types of synergies that you get when you get people sitting down who have shared interests, who have shared concerns, and are working together to find a common solution. When you have these types of situations, you can never predict in advance the types of savings, the types of efficiencies that can be brought about because of them.

I mean, some other direct motivations for getting together are streamlining disciplinary processes, you know, workplace issues. Timeliness is, of course, one of the most critical factors in maintaining healthy, nontoxic workplaces. But I think that over time this can go beyond that into other avenues, where they could become more effective, ones we can't predict in advance. I know that it should make them a bit more successful in their advocacy efforts because what they're advocating for is strong, healthy public forests. The increase in that efficacy is of benefit to all of us.

It's for these reasons plus, of course, the reasons that my hon. colleagues have so carefully and . . .

Ms Luff: Eloquently.

Mr. Piquette: . . . eloquently – okay – spoken to that this bill should pass without any amendment and in an expeditious manner.

Thank you for your attention this morning.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to you and through you to all members of the House on Bill 25, the Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act,

2017. The goal of our government is to ensure that our province's regulatory organizations are able to do their important work, to serve and protect the well-being, safety, and public interests of all Albertans. Bill 25 proposes to consolidate the College of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists into one regulatory entity.

Consolidating the colleges is what the members have been asking for since 2013. The consolidation would provide increased efficiencies. Both colleges were in favour of the consolidation, and in 2014 their members voted overwhelmingly in favour of the consolidation, with 90 per cent in support, in favour. The colleges then approached our government asking to amend the act. In 2015 both organizations began sharing an office space, using their new name and logo. This bill would make what is already being done official.

11:10

Our government has been consulting with and working closely with both organizations. I would like to add that the Alberta Forest Products Association supports the changes as well.

Having just one regulatory body would also eliminate any confusion as to two organizations providing the same services. A consolidation of the two organizations would save valuable resources and time as well as money. It would also see an increase in efficiencies of administrative and disciplinary processes. The consolidation of these two organizations into one governing body will provide for a strong and unified voice for our forestry professionals.

The proposed amendments we are speaking to today were requested by both the College of Alberta Professional Foresters as well as the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists, the forestry professionals who are so vitally important to ensuring the proper management of our province's forested land.

Our province's forestry professionals' work is second to none. They provide outstanding work in research, conservation, reclamation, protection, renewal, forest management as well as education. I'd like to thank all of the forestry professionals, the men and women, who make life better for all Albertans today and into the future.

In closing, Madam Chair, with the support of the College of Alberta Professional Foresters as well as College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists and the Alberta Forest Products Association, I too wholeheartedly support this common-sense bill and encourage all in the House today to support it as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really happy to stand today and speak to Bill 25 as this is something that, of course, the associations involved have been asking for. You know, forestry is, of course, one of the largest industries in Alberta. Approximately two-thirds of our province is forested, and 90 per cent of that is held in public trust. This is a very important industry for our province as a whole.

The College of Alberta Professional Foresters was incorporated in 1985, with voluntary registration and protected titles, and in 2000 the registration provisions became mandatory. The College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists was proclaimed in 2002 although consultation began in 1995. The original Alberta Forest Technologists Association was incorporated in 1992. This new college signalled a change in the forest industry here in Alberta and a commitment to both scientific and sustainable forest management.

In the summer of 2015 the College of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists came together to form one stronger voice under the new name Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals. On the established website for the AAFMP they say:

Together we are becoming the provincial regulatory body for Alberta's Forest Management Professionals. We support the continual development of our membership so that all Albertans can benefit from healthy, sustainable forests.

As we move to the future we are excited to deliver not only a new name, but a fresh unified look.

Madam Chair, as we've stated a number of times, 90 per cent of their membership – their membership is 1,600 members approximately – has voted in favour of this amalgamation of their two associations. I think that removing that marketplace confusion for all Albertans will be vitally important to our professional regulatory organizations, and it helps us move more quickly and easily with a little less red tape, which is always a good thing, apparently. It'll be increased efficiencies and faster processing for all things that relate to the forestry models. Allowing them to come together is just something that – you know, they already provide the education, the research, conservation, reclamation, protection, renewal, and forest management planning, and it's the envy of other jurisdictions here in North America.

Because they've been asking for this change for quite a long time, I just would like to say that I wholly support us moving forward on this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to quickly correct the record. In my remarks earlier today about this bill I spoke about the members of our caucus who had attended the Alberta Forest Products AGM in Jasper, and I neglected to mention the Minister of Labour, who was there holding a panel. The Minister of Transportation: I did mention the fact that he was there.

I just wanted to correct the record and thank the Minister of Labour for coming as well.*

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 25, Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017?

[The clauses of Bill 25 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. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, that's my cue, Madam Chair, so I would move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Mr. Hinkley: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 23, Bill 25.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? Please say no. So ordered.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, we've had some wonderful debate today on our two bills in Committee of the Whole, so I will move that we call it 12 o'clock and adjourn till 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:18 a.m.]

*See page 1815, right column, paragraph 12.

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