



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 5, 2017

Day 61

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Third Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawthood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (Ind)
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
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Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
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Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 2 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Vacant: 1

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Babcock	McKitrick
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Drysdale	Stier
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Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Dr. Starke: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my very great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a gentleman who is no stranger to this Assembly or to these halls. He served as the MLA for Wetaskiwin-Camrose from 2008 through 2015 and also served in cabinet as Minister of Justice and minister of agriculture and rural development, and he's someone that I'm very privileged to call a great friend, Mr. Verlyn Olson. He is here with his grandson Josh, who is visiting the Legislature not for the first time, I've learned, and it was really great to see Verlyn and Josh once again. I'd ask everyone to please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the students from one of the finest schools in central Alberta, Delburne school. They are accompanied today by teachers Tricia Simpson and Derk Unterschultz along with chaperones Jacquie Myers, Jacquie Svederus, Heather Davidson, James and Christina Guynup, Mandy Marek, and Lance Neilson. I would ask them all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Nielsen: My guests aren't here.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the students of Provost public school with their teacher Mrs. Sherrilyn Spencer along with some chaperones: Mr. Robin Folkins, Mr. Jim Fanning, Mrs. Roxane Murray, and Mrs. Cindy Hill. I ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly 60 incredibly intelligent students who are the pride of the riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie and are here from Daly Grove school. They're accompanied by their teachers, Lisa Bruce and Andrea Sloat, as well as by one of the parent chaperones, Jit Chaudhary. I ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other school groups to be introduced?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Jonathan Jacobs. Jonathan is an entrepreneur. He is an oil sands electrician, and he's also part of the Alberta Party's energy policy team in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I would ask Jonathan to please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members in the Assembly Mark Taylor, who is a long-time Alberta Party member. He was a candidate for the party in the 2015 by-election in Calgary-Foothills. His background is in engineering, business coaching. He's a long-time online fan of question period, and this is his first time to visit us in person. He's also been recently appointed as the executive director of the Alberta Party. I ask Mark to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Sherry and Matt Sartorelli, who are seated in your gallery. Last week the government introduced presumptive legislation in Bill 30 that would further protect paramedics who suffer from a myocardial event within 24 hours of their shift. I spoke to the clause in the bill, referencing my good friend and teacher David Sartorelli. Dave suffered a heart attack just hours after his shift on medic 8 in Calgary, only to have the same unit and the crew that he relieved respond to his emergency. To our sadness, Dave passed away. Dave served this province for over 32 years but not just him; his family served, too. With the four-on and four-off schedule – and I speak from experience – you give up half. You miss half of every experience, and so does your family. To honour Dave and his family, I ask that Sherry and Matt stand to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the guests seated in your gallery and the members' gallery, paramedics who worked with Dave Sartorelli. As the MLA for Calgary-South East has just spoken beautifully about, Dave was a 32-year-old paramedic in Calgary, but more than that, he was a beloved leader and mentor. Today we have with us: from Calgary, David Van Bakel, Donna Zarecki, Raj Dattani, Stuart Brideaux, and Greg Undershute; and from Edmonton, Mike Webb, Dave Hansen, Julian Power, Amy-Jean Easton, Hayley Ballantyne, Angela Lussoso, and Alex Campbell.

Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased that some of his colleagues are here today as we continue to debate Bill 30, which will ensure myocardial coverage for first responders. They will tell you that if Dave were here today, his message would be: "Love your job. Love the fact that you get to make a difference. Love the fact that you can and will make a difference." I'd now like to ask these dedicated men and women to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I'm also honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly senior leadership from the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. Today we have the HSAA president, Mike Parker, and board member Donna

Farquharson. The HSAA represents over 24,000 paramedical, technical, professional, and general support employees in the public and private health care sectors of Alberta, and on behalf of all of their members they're here to help us honour Dave Sartorelli. They will tell you that there are many people Dave touched and influenced through his passion for advanced cardiac life support and EMS education. I would like to ask Mike and Donna to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I'm very excited to introduce three residents of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview: Jennifer, Joel, and Sapphira Lewin. These are community leaders and strong advocates for people with special needs. I hope that we can give them a warm traditional reception from the Assembly now, please.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my constituency assistant, Teresa Sutherland. Teresa brings over 25 years of experience as a social worker and works hard every day to make life better for the people of Spruce Grove-St. Albert. She is here today for the introduction of my colleague's Henson trust private member's bill. If passed, the bill would make a real difference in the lives of a number of my constituents. I would ask her to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am truly pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some fantastic employees from Service Alberta, one of the two best departments in the GOA. This past summer this team led Service Alberta across the province to engage with consumers on improvements to our consumer protection legislation, which I had the honour of tabling just yesterday. As a result of their hard work, we have tabled significant updates to our consumer protection laws. I'm so proud of them, and they will better protect consumers' pocketbooks, help Alberta businesses succeed and consumers have more confidence. I wish that I had the time to introduce all of them individually. They all mean a great deal to me. I'd like them all to rise together as a group and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

1:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce some very special guests who are seated in the public gallery. I invite them to rise as I introduce them, please: Sam; his parents, Kirstin and Mathias; as well as his grandparents Marianne and Kelly. Sam walked 100 kilometres over 100 days for the Kidney Foundation. Several members of his family have been donors and recipients, including his grandmother, who is here today, who donated her kidney several years ago. I had the pleasure of joining Sam for a portion of his journey this September, when we walked around the Legislature fountain. Sam has raised awareness about organ donation, and it's great to see three generations committed to this project. Please join me in welcoming them to our Assembly.

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a number of guests who are here today in support of my proposed bill on Henson trusts: Erin Waite, agency director at Connections Counselling; Andrea Hesse, who is the CEO of the Alberta Council of Disability Services and also serves on the board of the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations; Gordon VanderLeek, founder of VanderLeek Law, a firm specializing in disability issues; Leonard Lozowy, the president of the Gateway association in Edmonton; Julie Boucher, family support liaison at the Edmonton Down Syndrome Society; Robin Slater, a strong AISH advocate who came all the way from the beautiful town of Canmore. I'd also like to introduce several people who took part in the bill consultation process: Dr. Frances Harley-Urtasun, Shirley Bruha, Gino Ferri, Denise Layton, Dr. Robert Pearcey, and, last but certainly not least, the coexecutive directors of the Medicine Hat and District Food Bank, Celina Symmonds and Tammy Vanderloh. If I could ask all my guests to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Dr. Turner: Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the CEO of Inclusion Alberta, Mr. Bruce Uditsky. Inclusion Alberta advocates for and supports individuals with developmental disabilities. Mr. Uditsky is here today to show support for Bill 211, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (Discretionary Trust) Amendment Act, 2017. I would ask Mr. Uditsky to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House again the two codirectors of the Medicine Hat food bank. These two ladies are excellent directors, but they are also tremendous community builders, leaders in a brown bag lunch program for over 30 schools in Medicine Hat, leaders in community garden enhancement for providing food and opportunities for family members, and are great at making solutions to help use and harvest the elk population for those that are in need. If I could ask Tammy Vanderloh and Celina Symmonds to again please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Members' Statements

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

Henson Trusts for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Today is an exciting day because I'll be tabling my first piece of legislation, which, if passed, would enable families to set up Henson trusts for their loved ones living with disabilities. The process of drafting this bill has taught me a lot about community-led consultations and the importance of Nothing about Us without Us. With the help of my staff and members of the community, that's what we set out to do, to learn what the community needed and to put forward proposed legislation that they had a hand in crafting.

The problem that my proposed private member's bill would fix came to my attention when a constituent in Calgary-Currie came

into my office to ask why a family member with a disability who inherited assets after a loved one passed away could have their AISH supports clawed back. This didn't seem right to me, Madam Speaker, so we began province-wide consultations. We heard from Albertans in Calgary and Peace River, from Edmonton, Chestermere, and Taber. Over 3,400 names are on a petition begun by Inclusion Alberta, asking the government to allow Henson trusts. The result of those consultations and outreach is my proposed private member's Bill 211.

For Richard, who lives in Calgary-Shaw, it is, to quote him, an absurd situation that Henson trusts are not allowed. Supporting them, quote, would only be logical. And as Tannis, who reached out to my Lethbridge-East colleague, explained, it is, quote, unfair that I, with a speaking voice and earning potential, am not limited in saving for the future but my brother, with neither, is.

This proposed legislation never would have been possible without the hundreds of Albertans who worked together to help me form this proposed legislation, and to them I say a very sincere thank you.

Forest Industry Concerns

Mr. Schneider: Madam Speaker, as the year winds to a close, I wonder what lessons this government will take away in regard to how they deal with forestry issues. We had another year of devastating fires in Alberta and B.C. The southern Alberta fires in the Suffield, Waterton, and Crowsnest regions, while not nearly on the scale of destruction of the Horse River fire of 2016, indeed were devastating and emotional to those affected, as much as those in Fort McMurray. We have the unresolved issue of Alberta's caribou strategy already several months overdue, which continues to cause worry to a forest industry just recently smacked with duties imposed by the U.S. softwood trade issue. We have an ever-increasing problem with the mountain pine beetle, and while Alberta has been doing a decent job in the past dealing with its effects, different solutions need to be found to win this battle.

Madam Speaker, this industry is already reeling from the issues of the past few years, and now January 1 is looming, and the NDP's tax on everything is set to go up to \$30 a tonne. That means increases on fuels such as gasoline, diesel, propane, and natural gas in order to harvest, log, and transport these trees to the mill. Then these trees need to enter the phase of processing, and the finished product must be shipped to market. Basically, this government will increase costs on practically every stage of the manufacturing process on a global commodity that simply cannot pass the increased costs on to consumers and remain competitive.

We already find ourselves in a situation where this government's complete mismanagement of numerous departments has seen investors flee the province. The province's credit rating dropped six times. Unemployment skyrocketed to the tune of 12,400 jobs lost in November alone.

Madam Speaker, this government needs to shelve the ideology, step back, and start doing what they can to stop the bleeding so that we have something to salvage in 2019.

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

Member for Lacombe-Ponoka's Remarks

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last week the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka made comments here in the House about the Chinese community. The members' words were more than just absurd; they were troubling, unhelpful, and offensive.

The member should know that Chinese-Canadians are not defined by what he said in those comments. We are more than that. We contribute significantly to this country economically and culturally. We don't need people perpetuating old school prejudices from the 1890s.

I believed that these stereotypes had subsided with time, but apparently they're still alive and well in the UCP. The fact that the member would use the Chinese community and these stereotypes in this Legislature to conjure up a narrative to score cheap political points is tasteless.

And it's not just me, Madam Speaker. I've spoken with leaders from the community, and they are not impressed. When I spoke with William Lau, a member of the Edmonton Chinese Young Leaders Council, I heard from him that the comments were inappropriate regardless of the context. They crossed a line. The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka never should have used those stereotypes. He never should have used those stereotypes in this House, and he should apologize to the Chinese-Canadian community.

I spoke with other prominent leaders in the Chinese community who stated that the member's words simply were not grounded in facts. She told me that his speech would do more harm than good and was an unsupported opinion.

This member needs to do the right thing. This member needs to apologize in this House for his comments about the Chinese-Canadian community and recognize that stereotypes do not contribute to political discussion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order noted.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction

Mr. Nixon: Just over one year ago right here this Premier's Energy minister said in regard to Trans Mountain that shovels will be in the ground within the year. Here we are a year later, and Kinder Morgan says that, unfortunately, the scope and pace of permits and approvals received does not allow for significant additional construction to begin at this time. It's clear that when it comes to getting Trans Mountain approved, this government is just not getting the job done. To the Premier: when was the last time that you bothered even reaching out to the federal and B.C. governments in regard to these important permit issues on Trans Mountain?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, the Conservatives couldn't get a pipeline built for 20 years, and now they want to act like tough guys, threatening a trade war with B.C. It would be amusing if it wasn't just so sad. I'll tell you something. I am not going to take any advice from the ready, fire, aim crowd over there. I'm going to continue to do what I've been doing since day one: fighting for good schools and hospitals and our kids and our loved ones, fighting for good jobs, and, of course, fighting to get this pipeline built.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, again, we do this every day. The Premier stands up. She will not answer simple questions. She goes on and on with fearmongering. All she can do is read her speaking

notes with her talking points. It is ridiculous. It was a simple question. So I'll ask another simple question. How many permits have been approved for Trans Mountain, and how many more need to be approved? That's it. Just a simple question.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, I will say that talk is cheap because, of course, the member opposite is reading from his press release of a mere two hours ago. Anyway, you know, I will say that, notwithstanding the price of talk, the members over there certainly can talk, but they just can't get anything done. Conservative government in B.C., Conservative government in Ottawa, Conservative government in Alberta, and still – still – they couldn't get a pipeline built. You know, you just have to really work hard to be that ineffective, but we aren't going to repeat those failures. We're going to get this pipeline built.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I have listed many pipelines that have been approved under the federal Conservatives, but we're here today to talk about the provincial NDP, who have two cancelled pipelines and another pipeline upgrade that looks like it's about to be prevented from being built despite this Premier saying that she would get it built.

Here's why the Premier doesn't want to talk about permits. The project requires 1,200 permits. Sixty-six of them have been approved. That is a long way from this Energy minister saying that shovels would be in the ground at this time this year. So the question to the Premier is: what is she doing to get those permits approved? Is she putting forward serious consequences to B.C. if they continue to block our pipelines, or is she just going to continue to stand up in this House and . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I do admit that we're not going to convince absolutely everyone, but what we are doing is working very hard to convince the moderate, progressive majority of Canadians. Indeed, I've set out across the country to do just that, and just last week I was in B.C. Now, I get that the members opposite might not be aware of that because, you know, they've been yelling and screaming so long, they're not part of the progressive, moderate majority of Canadians any longer. But I will tell you that, in fact, that's who we're talking about, and that's who we're talking to. We will not build walls. We will build pipelines, and we're going to get the job done.

The Deputy Speaker: Second main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, all this Premier has left is personal shots. Here are the facts. Paper approval from the Trudeau Liberals is not a project that is completed. That is not shovels in the ground. We were promised, we were told in this House that there would be shovels in the ground at this time. There are not. The Premier doesn't want to stand up and acknowledge that serious issue. She continues going forward with a carbon tax that is killing jobs in our province. In fact, the NDP are going to increase that carbon tax in less than a month. The question is this: if you can't get B.C. to work with you on those and you've proved that social licence is not working, will you cancel your carbon tax increase?

Ms Notley: Well, Madam Speaker, as you know, we are continuing our hard work to get the pipeline built. In addition, the federal government is also continuing that work as a result of not screaming

at them but actually talking to them on a regular basis, as we do, like adults. They have now joined our application at the NEB to ensure and to request that this matter move forward on a more timely basis. That's the kind of work that you do when you want to get outcomes, and that's why we will in fact deliver outcomes.

Mr. Nixon: Outcomes? Two cancelled pipelines and another one that's on the ropes.

The Premier says that she's talking to people about the pipelines. Well, I've pointed out that she's not even taking any action, but let's talk about talking. The last time that she met with B.C.'s NDP leader, precisely one year ago, to discuss this project, he said that she had no intention of persuading him on pipelines. My question, Madam Speaker, to the Premier is very, very simple. Do you have the intention of persuading them on pipelines now, or are you going to continue to allow this project to be blocked?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As the member opposite probably knows, the reality is that the decision has already been taken, and the delay in having this matter go forward is actually in relation to the decisions with respect to the city of Burnaby. That is why the matter is before the NEB, and that is why the government of Alberta is there alongside Kinder Morgan asking the NEB to move the matter along and to ensure that Burnaby doesn't overstep its authority. That is a reasonable thing to do. Having temper tantrums, grandstanding, and doing what they do pretty much from the minute they get up in the morning and look in the mirror does not help. It really doesn't. What we are doing does.

Mr. Nixon: Just over one year ago, when Ottawa gave paper approval to this project, the Premier said: we are showing here today that's how to get actual results. Well, one year later this project has only 66 of 1,200 permits needed. There are delays and no expected date for actual shovels to be in the ground. But Albertans in my constituency and your constituency are stuck with the job-killing carbon tax that will increase by 50 per cent. Given the failure of the NDP's plan on social licence, will they stand up, acknowledge it, and cancel the carbon tax increase?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Madam Speaker, let's talk a little bit about cost, and let's talk a little bit about affordability. Our government has capped electricity rates; the members opposite would jack them up. Our government extended the tuition freeze; the members opposite would make parents pay more. Our government banned door-to-door sales; the members opposite would lift the ban. We cut school fees; the members opposite would increase them. What we are doing is actually not increasing costs but increasing affordability, and I am very proud of that record.

The Deputy Speaker: Third main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: They capped electricity rates at double today's price, so thanks for nothing, Madam Premier.

Carbon Levy Increase

Mr. Nixon: In less than a month the job-killing carbon tax will be hiked by 50 per cent. This is a massive tax that the NDP did not campaign on in 2015. In fact, they hid it from Albertans. Despite their vague talk of social licence at least \$34.8 billion in investment has fled our oil sands sector alone since the NDP announced the

job-killing carbon tax. The economy is still suffering, and we have no new pipelines. Will the Premier admit that her social licence carbon tax scheme is a failure and cancel the increase?

Ms Notley: Well, what I will do is continue talking about the things that we have done to support Albertans and to reduce costs. For instance, we brought in a child benefit helping 380,000 children in the province of Alberta. The members opposite voted against it. We lowered the small-business tax. The members opposite certainly wouldn't do that because that's part of the climate leadership plan. Madam Speaker, 60 per cent of Alberta families get a carbon levy rebate to help them bring down their emissions to reduce their costs for years and years going forward. The members opposite think that's awful. The fact is that our plan is working, and those folks don't like it.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, the NDP brought in the largest tax increase in the history of our province, a tax increase that they did not campaign on and that they misled Albertans on.

Yesterday the government of Saskatchewan announced their climate change strategy, but Saskatchewan's plan aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without any sort of a carbon tax. So the question, Madam Speaker, is this. When the NDP were designing their climate change plan, did they even consider not having a carbon tax, or is this always just about the tax grab for this NDP government?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm so glad that the members opposite brought up the province of Saskatchewan. Let's compare. In Saskatchewan their growth rate is stuck at 1.4 per cent, and in Alberta our growth rate is 4.1 per cent. In Saskatchewan the government just brought in a made-in-Ottawa carbon tax, and what we have here is a made-in-Alberta carbon levy that industry got to be part of. That's what happens when you do your homework instead of sitting in the corner having a temper tantrum.

Mr. Nixon: The government of Saskatchewan did not bring in a made-in-Ottawa carbon tax. They actually stood up for the citizens, something this government should look at.

The Alberta economy has a long way to go until it recovers. Last month Alberta lost over 12,000 full-time jobs under this NDP government's watch. Alberta reports show that 13,000 insolvencies in our province happened last year alone, and this government is bringing in a 50 per cent increase to their job-killing carbon tax. The Premier can't defend it. That's why she talks about everything else. Will she stand up and admit that she's got it wrong and announce that she's going to cancel this increase on Albertans?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. What I'll stand up and admit is that since June of last year our province has created tens of thousands of new jobs. In addition, manufacturing is up. Retail sales are up. Housing starts are up. Small-business confidence is up.

Mr. Mason: Drilling is up.

Ms Notley: Drilling is up, Madam Speaker. Investment is up. Things are looking up. I know that makes the guys over there seem very sad, but thankfully it's making life better for Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Nonprofit Organizations

Mr. Clark: Why, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Alberta's not-for-profit sector has a long history of delivering high-quality, efficient services to Albertans, but there's a lot of worry that the government's so-called compassionate cuts will have a big impact on not-for-profits. There's evidence that they're attempting to take over rather than partner with certain programs that are delivered far more efficiently by the not-for-profit sector. Funding Alberta's not-for-profits is the most efficient way to deliver many services because it matches volunteers and donors with the comprehensiveness of government. To the Premier: will you commit to working with not-for-profits rather than taking a government-first approach?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, I will commit to that. In fact, I can also point to a record of exactly that ever since we were elected. One of the first things that our government did when we were elected was, through the urgings of our Minister of Finance, to make a significant increase in FCSS funding, which, of course, as the member opposite knows, is critical to many nonprofits across the province. We've done that on that matter. There's a raft of other ways in which we work closely with nonprofits, and we are pleased to do that because, of course, they contribute so much to the quality of life in our province.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, with respect, I think that many food banks and school nutrition programs would disagree that it's not a government-first approach.

One of Alberta's strengths is our ability to innovate, and innovation often means government working with partners to find new ways to deliver programs, but surprisingly this government has continued the Conservatives' inflexible funding approach through the AGLC, CIP, and CFEP, this to the detriment of not-for-profits that want to innovate, collaborate, and build capacity. Again to the Premier: will you commit to modernizing funding models to support innovation and collaboration in the not-for-profit sector?

Ms Notley: Well, Madam Speaker, we of course will always commit to work with nonprofits and to hear any concerns they have with respect to the efficacy of those programs for them, and we do work very, very closely with them. Last fiscal year alone over 17,000 charities were licensed to carry out charitable gaming, for instance, in support of their communities, and they were able to raise in excess of \$330 million. A lot of this is working. In addition, we've increased our partnership with many of these organizations. We've increased funding to them in a number of different ways because we value the important work that they provide to Albertans across this province, and we want to continue to build on those relationships.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's not just the amount of money; it's how those organizations are restricted in how they can use the money.

More and more Albertans are turning to the not-for-profit sector to simply survive the largest economic downturn in a generation, yet our constituency offices hear repeatedly that innovative project funding and funding applications continue to be denied. Now, I happen to know that this Finance minister knows a lot about this

sector, so my last question will be to you. To the Minister of Finance: as you consider your compassionate cuts, how can the not-for-profit sector trust that future funding will support the most innovative, creative, and effective programing?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, we have a dedicated team at AGLC. Just today I announced the hiring and appointment of Alain Maissoneuve, a 30-year employee of AGLC and the board before that. He is dedicated to making sure that charities in this province get what they need as a result of their gaming activities, 'racinos,' and other kinds of things. We're going to continue to work with all of our partners to make sure they have what they need going forward to serve the citizens of this province.

Seniors and Housing Minister's Activities

Ms Fitzpatrick: Madam Speaker, during our fall session we have heard about the many ministerial visits this summer. I know that the Minister of Seniors and Housing, who represents a wide diversity of Albertans, attended many of these visits. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Connecting with Albertans is essential in creating inclusive social policy. What connections have you made?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This summer I travelled all over this province and had the opportunity to listen to Albertans from Peace River to Medicine Hat. I visited 23 Albertan communities between June and August. I met John and Mable Baxter in Whitecourt. They contributed 3,500 volunteer hours serving their community – this included sharing their gift of music – which inspired their receipt of the minister's seniors service award.

Ms Fitzpatrick: To the same minister. I know that the constituents of Lethbridge-East certainly appreciated your visit. During your tour what did you hear from citizens?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of seniors.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Communities like Lethbridge-East are seeing the economy recover, and they want to know how our government is making life better for them. I met seniors at Green Acres lodges receiving excellent housing and social supports as respected and valued members of Lethbridge. I heard from seniors and Albertans on low income that they want our government to carefully find savings while protecting the public services that families count on. Albertans are looking for inclusive, caring, and steady leadership, and our government is providing it.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Madam Speaker, I have also heard from my constituents that they want government to focus on a steady economic recovery while helping vulnerable Albertans. What actions have you taken to address this issue?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of seniors.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We've protected more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years. We're building 4,100 homes for Albertans through our \$1.2 billion investment in affordable housing. We have 62 construction and planning projects currently under way. We know that Jason Kenney's Conservatives' reckless plan to cut 20 per cent of the province's budget would hit Albertans hard. Our government

is investing in safe and affordable housing to make life better for Albertans.

Alberta Health Services

Mr. Fraser: Our health system is very large and increasingly complex. The Alberta Health Services organizational chart shows hundreds of positions, with responsibilities ranging from patient care to IT services, and it can be hard to keep track of just who is responsible for what. While many of these positions are filled by passionate people delivering quality work for our health system, our financial reality means that we need to ensure that the maximum number of dollars is focused on the front line and not on management. To the Minister of Health: when was the last time the organizational structure of AHS was reviewed with the intent of eliminating obsolete or underperforming positions?

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the important question. Let me assure the member that it is a constant effort and that every time there is a budget done or every time there is a position that is vacated, it is certainly taken into consideration as well. I also want to assure the member that every year the Canadian Institute for Health Information, also known as CIHI, does an annual review, and he should be assured knowing that AHS's total administrative expenses are 30 per cent lower than the national average. Any time there's an opportunity to be even more efficient, we definitely take that into consideration, but in terms of comparisons to other jurisdictions, we are certainly far ahead, in a better position than others.

2:10

Mr. Fraser: Given that AHS is responsible for a number of projects to improve health care and given that it's important to note performance measures that indicate a clear end date and given that we can save money by wrapping up projects that have either achieved the objective or gone several years without significant progress and reinvesting that money in supporting front-line services and effective management, to the same minister: will you direct AHS to conduct a review of all ongoing projects to determine whether these projects are still delivering value for tax dollars and to ensure that staff positions associated with these projects are phased out if they're no longer needed?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, this is something that we've been working on with AHS, to review the grant cycle. Of course, every time that those are up, we think it's important that we consider whether or not we're getting full return on those investments. We do that both with AHS as well as with Alberta Health. For example, when the RPAP contract was up, we looked at whether or not it was being done most effectively, and we determined that there were opportunities to expand RPAP from specifically looking at physicians to looking at all health professionals in rural and remote communities. I'm really pleased to see that that's been expanded and that we're moving forward in a very thoughtful way to get better results for rural communities.

Mr. Fraser: Given that organizations like AHS and Alberta Health look to their leadership for guidance and given that reforming our health system is going to take an enormous effort and good ideas from all across the health system and given that workers in our

health system will be more willing to bring forward their cost-saving and innovation ideas if they see the heads of their respective departments doing the same, to the same minister: what are you doing along with AHS leadership to demonstrate to employees of AHS and Alberta Health that you're committed to fostering innovation and implementing cost-saving measures in our health system?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Madam Speaker and to the member for the thoughtful question. I want to reiterate that it's one of the leaner management structures across Canada at a ratio of 1 to 29 per staff leader, but that doesn't mean there aren't opportunities to do more. I certainly welcome the member opposite to continue these conversations if he has specific initiatives he'd like to bring forward. Just yesterday I spoke to the president and CEO of AHS. I meet with the board regularly. We continue to push for innovation, efficiency, and getting the most resources possible to the front lines instead of moving for rash, ideological cuts, like the Official Opposition's, of 20 per cent. That's not going to happen as . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I once again raise the name of Serenity. I do so for her mother, who does not want to see other parents suffer the pain that comes from losing a child. Last spring I promised her that I would do my best to convince my colleagues to implement a simple legislative change that will save the lives of Alberta's children. Premier, I made this proposal a year ago. Why has your government failed to adopt this common-sense, life-saving change on its own?

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

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to start by thanking Serenity's mother for being here today, for your bravery, for your steadfastness in advocating for your daughter even in the face of such a great loss. I want you to know that we all stand behind you in your continued advocacy for Serenity. Let me be clear. Reporting suspected abuse and neglect is the law. Our whole Legislature is committed to honouring the memory of Serenity by taking action to prevent child abuse.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: But you're not taking action, Minister.

Madam Speaker, thank you. Given that Serenity's law would make it the responsibility of every adult in Alberta to contact a police officer if they know a child is in need of intervention, Premier, will you commit to support passing Serenity's law today?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member for his proposal and his commitment to preventing child abuse, a commitment that we both share. Our law enforcement partners, including the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, have suggested to us that they have some concerns with this proposal, and we continue to have concerns about unintended consequences and confusion with this proposal. But I certainly made the commitment to Serenity's mother that I will work with the member and I will work with the police force and all that I need to do to advance the cause of preventing child abuse and preventing a tragedy such as happened to Serenity from happening again.

Mr. Ellis: Those are not the same law enforcement officers I've spoken to.

Given that on December 12, 2016, the Premier told me that Serenity's law is exactly the kind of practical idea her government was looking for to improve the child intervention system and given that despite their request for solutions and despite me handing them a solution that can be passed today – Premier, what is your excuse going to be now? And don't tell me. Tell Serenity's mother. She's here. She's behind me. Tell her to her face.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did sit down with Serenity's mother earlier today to hear from her about her suggestions and to offer my continued condolences. I want to thank the member for this proposal and acknowledge again his commitment to the issue. I have all intentions of having a meeting with the member opposite immediately to discuss our shared objective, which is preventing child abuse. I truly believe that by working together, we can ensure that other children are safe and supported.

Workers' Compensation Board Surplus Funds

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, far too often in this House we find ourselves at odds with each other. However, today I have a good-news story that I'd like to share with you and especially with Alberta businesses. The other day I learned that the WCB will be returning over \$350 million of surplus premiums to Albertans. As the Official Opposition we've worked hard and put a lot of pressure on the government to do the right thing and give back the money to Alberta's struggling businesses. To the minister: when will this money go back to the Alberta employers, and how will it be distributed, through a rebate or through offsets to the 2018 premiums?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud of the work that our government has been doing to review the Workers' Compensation Board and to bring in Bill 30. As part of Bill 30 we chose not to direct the WCB on what to do with surpluses in their accident fund. That leaves the decision with distributing or using the accident fund surpluses to a purpose that benefits the entire system in the hands of the WCB. This is not a government decision. This is one that WCB makes. I understand, having read the announcement from the WCB, that there will be credits issued to employers.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, given that it is always best practice to do an economic impact study and that surely the Minister of Labour performed such a study prior to engaging in a WCB review of this magnitude, to the minister: when did the actuarial firm Eckler complete their costing analysis, which indicated an increase of \$94 million due to your proposed changes, and why would the WCB withhold the full \$350 million? Did you expeditiously share Eckler's findings with the WCB?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Our government believes that comprehensively reviewing critical workplace legislation like the Workers' Compensation Act, like the Occupational Health and Safety Act, pieces of legislation that had not been reviewed in decades, is a priority, and that is why we

turned our attention to performing in-depth reviews and have brought forward results from those reviews through Bill 30. Making sure that we are making sound decisions that create a sustainable workers' compensation system, that gives employees fair rehabilitation is a priority.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, given that the Official Opposition has been insistent that this government return the surplus and given that the WCB felt compelled to hold back the \$350 million until they knew what the cost of these changes would be, is the minister willing to admit that she caused Alberta businesses undue hardship because of her year-long musings about how to change the WCB? In fact, even better, is she willing to apologize to our job-creating business owners who had to do without this much-needed money during one of the worst recessions in Alberta history?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a little rich to hear the accusations coming from the members opposite when we know that their plan of billions of dollars of reckless cuts would hurt Albertans, would hurt business, would hurt business confidence. We engaged in a comprehensive, robust investigation into the workers' compensation system. We worked with businesses. We worked with users of the system. We worked with representatives. We brought forward through Bill 30 a package of responsible changes to make sure there is a sustainable system that delivers fair rehabilitation.

Renewable Energy Land Leases

Mr. Stier: Well, Madam Speaker, just like a year ago, my constituency office continues to receive questions from landowners regarding leasing of their agricultural lands for solar and wind farm proposals. Despite what was promised in the climate tax plan propaganda, this government has obviously failed again to provide information or local consultation sessions to potentially affected landowners about locations, unsightly transmission lines, substations, nor anything on subsidies and compensation. To the Premier: why hasn't your climate tax plan included local information and consultation sessions?

2:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the very important question. On my trips across the province – I made many of them, putting on many miles, talking to farmers and ranchers across the province, farmers and ranchers that, when I talked to them, they let me know: what can they do? They want to be able to do their part for the green economy. They want to do their part to reduce emissions. They want to do their part to gain those energy efficiencies and those economic benefits, and they're more than willing. We'll continue working with them to find those efficiencies to make them more profitable in the evergreening economy.

Mr. Stier: Well, Madam Speaker, despite what the forestry minister has just said, given that a landowner who called just yesterday has to date received no information about those infrastructure and compensation concerns and given that agreeing to such a contract would cause loss of use of his prime agricultural land, where hundreds of acres will be taken out of production, and doing so would violate the primary goals and objectives regarding agriculture of a regional plan, to the minister: with all the rhetoric

that has accompanied your climate tax plan, again, why has your government, obviously, not informed Albertans of this vital information?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker and Member for the question. To reiterate, farmers and ranchers do want to do their part. They're looking forward to be able to take part in the climate leadership plan. They do their part to generate electricity on their properties. They do so willingly. The member is trying to allude that somehow they're being forced into taking part in the green economy. They're not. They're more than willing, and we're working as a government, making sure that they have those opportunities available to them and that they take advantage of them.

Mr. Stier: Well, Madam Speaker, just like landowners, I have no trust with this faulty climate tax plan.

Given that the particular landowner involved is also concerned about how these projects will be funded and how much subsidy has been given to those companies that are inquiring about his property and given that he has legitimate concerns about what might happen to his agricultural land if one of these companies goes insolvent, will the minister confirm today that all participating landowners who risk their property and join negatively impacted neighbours will be fully compensated in the event of a project failure?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you again to the member for the question. Important to note that there are many advocacies out there that are able to help landowners in negotiating a lease with companies. That includes the Farmers' Advocate and Alberta Utilities Commission. You know, the government is routinely working with the Farmers' Advocate to ensure that landowners' rights continue to be paramount, that they continue to have those rights. They will continue to do so. This government, my ministry, the Ministry of Environment and Parks will continue working with farmers and ranchers across the province to ensure that they have the opportunity to take advantage of the green economy and that they are protected in their landowners' rights.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

New-home Owner Consumer Protection

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Buying a home is one of the most important purchases that a person can make. With more and more young families moving into and raising their families in my riding, many constituents I speak to are thinking about making the jump to home ownership but are apprehensive about potential consumer risks after reading stories about Reid Built Homes. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is the government doing to protect Albertans that invest their savings in a new home?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't know how you could miss me.

Buying a new home is the largest investment an Albertan can make. It's an investment in their family and their kids and their future, and when Albertans make that investment, they deserve to be protected. We've been working with our GOA partners in

Service Alberta and Treasury Board and Finance along with the Alberta New Home Warranty Program to ensure we are offering consumers comprehensive protections on both the front end and the back end of buying their homes. Our government will continue to engage with Albertans and stakeholders while we make practical changes to put consumers first.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Madam Speaker, you need a licence to go fishing in this province, and now you need a licence to construct a home. To the same minister: how is this government protecting homebuyers from builders that have a history of fraud or negligence?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. One of our government's top priorities is putting people first and protecting consumers. After hearing from Albertans, we took action to implement a better licensing framework that will protect consumers and help them distinguish the few bad builders from the many, many good builders. Builders must provide information about their track record with related consumer protection and safety legislation, disclose any history of fraud or building-related court proceedings, and provide information about their corporate structure. As I said, our government is protecting and improving things that will make a difference in the lives of all Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you. There were over 22,000 housing starts in Alberta in 2016. Given the large number of Albertans that purchased a new home, can the same minister inform the House about what he heard from the public and from new-home builders on this issue?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member. What we heard was that while mandatory warranty for new homes in Alberta was a positive step, additional measures had to be taken to strengthen the program in order to meet the program outcomes, so as of December 1 all residential builders will require a licence to obtain building permits for new homes and to build new homes. This licensing program was a collaborative solution created by our government, industry leaders, and everyday Albertans to protect consumers and make life easier when buying a home. I am proud of this new program.

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

Blue Quills University Funding

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Almost everyone I talk to agrees that postsecondary education is a gateway to prosperity and self-sufficiency, but it appears not to this government. To the Minister of Advanced Education: does the minister believe that Albertans, regardless of their location or ethnicity, should have the same support and access to postsecondary education?

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to talk about all of the good things that our government has done to support the students of Alberta through the Ministry of Advanced Education. Just last week I was proud to announce the continuation of our government's freeze on tuition. That means that more than 250,000 students in Alberta will pay the same price for tuition that they did last year and the year before and the year before that. Under those guys we had the highest tuition in the entire country. Under our government we're among the lowest in the whole country.

Mr. Hanson: Madam Speaker, given that the minister wouldn't even say yes about equivalent support and given that graduates with various degrees from Blue Quills First Nations university, a university only recently given accredited status, are being hired to run programs at major universities because of the superior and unique training they've received, does the minister support the idea that provincial support should be relatively equal for equivalent degree programs and that a degree is a degree is a degree?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased that our government is supporting university and college education all across the province. We've done a number of things in addition to freezing tuition. We've increased operating grants by 2 per cent every year to every university and college in the province. In addition to that, we're increasing foundational learning opportunities through adult learning providers and English as a second language programs. We're doing a number of things to support adult learners in this province, and our government is very proud of our track record in supporting the students of Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that operating support for postsecondary institutions is a \$2.3 billion line item while Blue Quills struggles to afford a load of gravel for their parking lot and given that a degree program at a major university can be subsidized by Advanced Education upwards of \$9,000 per student while a degree-granting program at Blue Quills First Nations university only receives in the area of \$2,400, to the minister: if a degree is a degree, why does Advanced Education discriminate against Blue Quills degrees? What inherent bias is your department practising?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Madam Speaker, we're proud of our continued support of the First Nations colleges in the province of Alberta, but let's talk about what their plan would do to the offering of degrees in the province of Alberta. They're proposing cuts so large that they would be the equivalent of shutting down the University of Alberta, the fifth-highest ranked university in the country of Canada. Those guys want to close it down or the equivalent thereof. Under their plan tuition would skyrocket and very few students would have the opportunity to pursue higher education. We're standing against that. We're in favour of . . .

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

2:30

Long-term and Continuing Care Beds

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Wait-lists continue to grow for people waiting to enter into a continuing care, long-term bed, with an increase of 32 per cent to our wait-list reported in Alberta Health Services' latest annual report. Our seniors population is

growing exponentially, expected to hit a quarter of our population by 2032. Recognizing that we need to plan for the future with forethought into the planning, how does this government identify, plan, and promote the development of facilities that cater to seniors?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the important question. Certainly, we did inherit a significant infrastructure deficit, predicated by the deep cuts that we all bore in Alberta during the '90s. As a result, when our government was elected, we were elected on a platform to provide 2,000 new long-term care and dementia care spaces for the people of Alberta. That's why we're moving forward to make sure that those happen as quickly as possible in the areas where they're most needed, including in the hon. member's riding, in the community of Fort McMurray. We're really proud to move forward on a project that his colleagues promised for decades, didn't move on, and this government is doing so.

Mr. Yao: Madam Speaker, this government has promised 2,000 long-term, extended care beds since 2015. According to Alberta Health Services our need for continuing care placements has gone up from 1,411 to 1,873 people just last year. The facilities required to meet this need will alleviate many of the pressures on our hospitals that are housing these patients. How is this government planning, designing, and budgeting for continuing care and long-term beds that serve Albertans?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much again, Madam Speaker. Just in the first three months of this year, for example, we opened 388 new continuing care spaces for the people of this province. We're helping them transition from a hospital back into community, which we know is a better opportunity for them to age in. We're also working to make sure that we can keep them in their homes longer by ensuring that we have adequate supply of home-care funds, something that we know has been neglected for many years. We're moving forward on increasing investment in those areas instead of moving for deep ideological cuts like the members opposite. I'm happy to work with this specific member, who seems to be asking for a very reasonable line of questioning around investment, instead of all of his colleagues who are calling for deep cuts, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Yao: Madam Speaker, there are six acres of prime land in downtown Fort McMurray which are ideal for the aging-in-community concept, and the design that's being pushed forward by the government is a sprawling four-storey complex that fills the majority of the site for only 144 beds. It's common knowledge that it's cheaper to build up. Does this government understand that this site could potentially house thousands of residents at a reduced cost with a different design so that as demand increases, land is readily available. Or do you enjoy spending money studying communities and purchasing more ideal parcels of land for future growth?

Ms Jansen: Madam Speaker, one of the things that has been a real pleasure for me is to be able to work with the folks of Fort McMurray. I met with my good friend the new mayor of the Wood Buffalo region, Don Scott, and with his new council and just had a fantastic conversation about the continuing care centre at Willow Square, well under way and on track to start construction in the spring of 2018. One of the conversations, one of the things that we

talked about, and one of the great things about the folks in Fort McMurray and our excellent relationship is that they are an incredibly collaborative new council and looking forward to working on...

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Wildfire Response Reviews

Mr. Schneider: Madam Speaker, as Forestry critic it is important that I ask these questions. Despite assurances by this minister that his department has learned valuable lessons from the Flat Top Complex and Horse River fire reports, it's plain to see that only lip service is being paid to several glaring issues. A debrief of the Kenow wildfire paints a bleak picture of fire communications in complete disarray, similar to what was experienced in the early stages of the Horse River fire. Minister, there was nearly an 18-month gap between those two incidents. Why are the same communication issues popping up?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much. You know, Madam Speaker, the Kenow fires were very wild and unpredictable, and we know that we empathize with all the folks that have lost livestock or buildings. We have been working closely with people on the ground. My folks and AEMA are always in contact with them and throughout those fires. It was a pretty hairy situation, I know, with the different jurisdictions that were involved. The municipalities that were there: we are working with them to educate them on, you know, what they need and what we can do better to help them, as we do after every disaster.

Mr. Schneider: Given that the municipality of Wood Buffalo only learned of the city's evacuation order from Twitter, of all places, and given that during the recent fire that we all know as Kenow, it's alleged that the Premier commented on loss of buildings and the status of the wildfire within the MD of Pincher Creek, information that was never shared with either municipal staff or elected officials, Minister, when will your department fix the glaring lack of information sharing between local, provincial, and federal entities during disasters that happen in this province?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, we had field officers on the ground during this fire. They communicated directly with local officials, and it is completely inaccurate to say that provincial officials had the information before they did. We had the POC in contact with them day by day, minute by minute. Every time something was happening, they were informed. We will continue to work with them, and I don't appreciate the opposite member's inaccurate information that he's trying to portray about the hard-working people in those municipalities and the first responders.

Mr. Schneider: Madam Speaker, I expect that I will have to FOIP that to try and get an answer.

Given that it has been over five years since the Flat Top recommendations came out and given that the minister stated, "As of March 17, all 21 recommendations from the Flat Top Complex Wildfire Review Committee have either been completed or fully incorporated within Agriculture and Forestry's day-to-day wildfire management program," Minister, will it take another tragedy before

your department fixes these dangerous shortfalls in emergency situations?

Mr. S. Anderson: Madam Speaker, as I said, we continuously work with the municipalities on what they're doing during a disaster. This is an extreme event. Whenever there is a disaster, we do lessons learned after the fact, we discuss with officials on the ground, and we try to do things better. [interjections] Thanks, guys. I appreciate that if you'd listen to my answer, you'd hear me. We continue to work with everybody on the ground. We have resources available for municipal officials, CAOs, for the fire departments in those areas. We are always working with them, and we will continue to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton-Valley-Devon.

Half-day Kindergarten School Transportation Fees

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Having access to high-quality education at an early age is important for the healthy development of any child, and many parents choose different educational routes depending on their backgrounds and their circumstances. One choice that many parents make is to enrol their children in either a half-day kindergarten program or an alternating full-day program. Many experienced educators and parents believe that their children are best served by having the half-day option. Does the Minister of Education support half-day kindergarten and this educational option for all Albertans who choose it?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, it's up to the school boards on how they choose to disseminate kindergarten education across the province. I mean, certainly, different places make different choices according to their resources and their population of kindergarten children. That being said, the recent example of the member, I think, is pertaining to Elk Island for their kindergarten. That school board made that choice, and that's the path that they chose to take.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that many educators and parents believe that a half-day kindergarten option is best for their children and given that the Elk Island public school board has stated that changes to the fees they are able to charge as a result of Bill 1 mean they are no longer able to offer the noon-hour busing service and given that this is yet another transportation issue dumped on school boards, schools, and parents by Bill 1, again to the minister: how is Bill 1 improving the lives of parents and their children when it continues to have a negative impact across Alberta?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm glad that this is brought up because, of course, what we have done is to make sure that we put in more than \$54 million to school boards in order for them to reduce school fees. If they choose to have school fees or increase those fees, we have a mechanism by which they can do that. I've yet to hear from Elk Island kindergarten as to why they chose to put these two things together. I believe it was about \$34,000 that was the reason that they were choosing to go down this route. Certainly, they should be careful to listen to the parents

in Sherwood Park to make sure they're providing the services that they need for their children.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

2:40

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Bill 1 has now been directly cited by multiple school boards in both rural and urban Alberta as a reason that they are no longer able to offer transportation services, which parents previously relied upon, and given that the upcoming 50 per cent increase to the carbon tax will significantly increase transportation costs for school boards across Alberta, again to the minister: what is your plan to address the increased cost that your 50 per cent increase in the carbon tax is placing on school boards?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, all of the reductions to school fees were backstopped by the government of Alberta giving to those school boards. If any school board is suggesting that they are short of those funds, they, in fact, did receive that money from the provincial government. You know what? We fund public education on this side of the House. If you made 20 per cent cuts, as you from the UCP would suggest, you wouldn't be seeing any of these things. You would end up with very large class sizes and very inadequate education courtesy of Jason Kenney and the UCP.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed with Members' Statements, I've had a number of requests here to revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: We can go ahead, but I would remind members to please keep it brief.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature my fantastic constituency staff from the beautiful constituency of Calgary-Fort. Maxine Parris and Lisa Hari do an excellent job through outreach and casework to help constituents in Calgary-Fort. They do an excellent job in my office. They are my right and left hand when they're there, thunder and lightning. I would ask that they stand up and take the wishes.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly representatives from the Resilient Youth in Stressed Environments research project in Drayton Valley. In attendance today are some of the kids that I used to teach: Chaise Combs, Lacey Sicinsky, and Sarah Jane Peltier, who make up the youth advisory committee, and Lola Strand of our district FCSS, who is part of the local advisory committee. Laura Wright is the site research co-ordinator. Unfortunate for us but fortunate for her, she is currently in China for work and was unable to make it here today. RYSE is a five-year multinational research project that will explore patterns of resilience among young people in changing environments. I would

ask that the individuals please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of the most fantastic students in all of the province from Balwin school. Unfortunately, they had to run to go catch their bus, but it's still a pleasure to be able to introduce them today. They were joined by two of their teachers, Ms Christine Allarie and Ms Alanna Wolgien, and also joined by one of the parents, Bridgett McAllister. Like I said, they had to run for their bus, but if we could still provide them with the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Being a first-generation immigrant, I have learned a lot comparing and contrasting how we do business in Canada and elsewhere in the world. The world is mocking Canada. In India, when I worked for Reliance Industries, we built the world's largest refinery and petrochemical complex in three years. Three years, Madam Speaker. Last night word broke that the Trans Mountain expansion project is going to be held up for permitting. This pipeline is a lifeline for Alberta energy exports, expanding the existing right-of-way where a pipeline has operated since the 1950s without significant incident. Kinder Morgan's president told the audience in Calgary last month: in the presence of our Premier it's been six years and counting now that we've commenced this journey and almost a year to the day when we heard that we had federal approval for the project; there are no shovels in the ground yet and nothing until at least September 2020. The company is concerned that it could cost them about \$35 million in expenses while they also stand to lose more than \$90 million in revenue for every month of delay.

We all want to see the Trans Mountain project succeed. Unfortunately, the NDP was naive and flat footed. The NDP sold Albertans a false bill of goods when it said that its job-killing carbon tax would buy social licence for much-needed pipelines. No social licence was ever achieved, just a wink and nudge between the Premier and the Prime Minister that the one's actions have given cover to the other's.

Madam Speaker, we need to fix this problem and fix it fast, or else the Trans Mountain expansion will meet the same fate as the Energy East pipeline, and the world is watching.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Athabasca Coalition 4 Success

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Recently I had the opportunity to attend a presentation by the Athabasca Coalition 4 Success, and I was so impressed with what they've accomplished that I want to share it with members of the Assembly here today.

Madam Speaker, as a parent of a child with special needs I know from direct experience how difficult it can be to find appropriate summer care, especially in rural areas. The partners who make up the Athabasca Coalition 4 Success recognize this and have created

a unique summer program in Athabasca to help youth grow. This initiative allows community partners to work together to help children and youth attend events and activities in their community on a regular and consistent basis, to interact with their peers, develop social skills, and have the opportunity to successfully participate in community events. What's more, they do this by leveraging existing funding streams and capacities.

Over the course of the summer children who participate have shown amazing progress in achieving developmental goals. As just one example, at the start of the program almost none of the children were able to stay with activities until they were finished, but at the end almost the entire group was able to do so.

I want to thank the many partners who made this initiative happen, including AHS, ACS, ACSS, Aspen View public schools, Athabasca county FCSS, Whispering Hills Day Care Society, and Aspen Collaborative Services.

Although we often speak of the challenges of providing services in rural areas, there are also great advantages, one of the greatest being just how interconnected everyone in smaller communities is. The groups that form the Coalition 4 Success are a perfect example of local organizations working in partnership to answer a local need, and it is a model that other communities might want to look closely at.

Thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker: Drayton Valley-Devon.

Resilient Youth Study in Drayton Valley

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Oil and gas production and climate change have significant impacts on social, economic, and environmental systems that often affect young people's mental health and overall well-being. To better understand these complex relationships, the Resilient Youth in Stressed Environments, or RYSE, research project has been studying the resilience of the young people in Drayton Valley; Secunda, South Africa; and Cambridge Bay, Nunavut.

This project is led by the Resilience research centre and Dalhousie University in partnership with other institutions and organizations such as the University of Pretoria in South Africa, the Resilience by Design lab, and Royal Roads University. Researchers have worked with partners from the oil and gas industry, government, school boards, and key organizations to better understand how to support the health and well-being of young people in changing environments.

This research is critically important in Drayton Valley as educators and mental health professionals report rates of anxiety and depression higher than the national average and a threefold increase in the caseloads of family support workers. The town of Drayton Valley has made efforts to support young people's resilience in a variety of ways, including developing social policies and family supports and addressing social problems like substance abuse. Our town was well positioned to participate in this international research project.

Among other things, RYSE participants in Drayton Valley have prepared digital stories that outline their concerns, perspectives, and ideas for community and social change. They also have participated in the resilience innovation skills certificate program. These youth are developing a vision of community and engaging in conversations that will help shape our future, and I would like to commend them for their participation. I would call on all members of this Legislature to work in partnership with children and youth from their constituencies. We need to recognize our youth.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2:50

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report recommending the reappointment of Mr. Del Graff as Child and Youth Advocate for a term to expire on March 31, 2020. Copies of this report are available online and through the committees branch.

Notices of Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I stand to give oral notice to the Assembly that I will be raising later today a question of privilege against the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 211

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (Discretionary Trust) Amendment Act, 2017

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is with great pride that I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 211, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (Discretionary Trust) Amendment Act, 2017.

This bill is intended to make life better for Albertans with disabilities by defining a Henson trust, also known as a discretionary trust, in the AISH Act and then specifically exempting the Henson trust from the consideration of assets. Madam Speaker, the love and care that parents and guardians have for their children with disabilities extends throughout their life and beyond. By exempting Henson trusts from the AISH Act, we are standing behind both the people with disabilities and their parents and guardians just like so many other jurisdictions in Canada already do.

This bill is the result of extensive consultation with the AISH community, and I believe this bill will honour the work of all those Albertans who helped me with this. I look forward to the discussions and deliberations with my colleagues in the House.

[Motion carried; Bill 211 read a first time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Bill 216

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2017

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 216, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2017.

Bill 216 amends the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act to ensure that all adults in Alberta know they are responsible for contacting authorities if they know of a child in need of intervention. Currently the legislation requires adults to contact a director of child intervention. This bill will direct them to contact a director or a police officer. Adding the term "police officer" clarifies that all adults are responsible for helping children in need

of intervention and that there is an easy way to do it. Far too many times in Alberta children have died in horrible circumstances that could have been prevented if an adult had spoken up.

I would like to thank Professor Juliet Guichon, who is a law professor at the University of Calgary, for pointing out this ambiguity in Alberta's law, which Bill 216 is addressing, as well as a friend, Mr. Brendan Miller, who is a prominent lawyer as well in Calgary, who called attention to the same issue and assisted me in addressing this bill, Madam Speaker.

It is with the sincerest honour that I pay special tribute to the mother of little Serenity, whose little girl inspired this bill, and her family. I'd like to thank you for being here today, and I sincerely hope and believe that this Legislature will do the right thing in order to help protect children in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 216 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to table five copies of a document containing hundreds of pages of signatures of Albertans who signed to show their support for Henson trusts. It's time for Alberta to get in line with the rest of the country and to allow the use of the Henson trust to support people with disabilities without having their government payments clawed back. This document represents the names of over 3,400 concerned Albertans, and we need to listen to their voices.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Yes, Madam Speaker. I have four tablings I'd like to do. I referenced an article in my speech last night: The War on Ticket Bots Is Unlikely to Be Won. This is an \$8 billion, world-wide problem, where ticket bots cannot be simply eradicated with one piece of legislation saying that we shouldn't do it.

I also referenced the ABVMA annual reports for 2014, 2015, and 2016. The ABVMA is the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. In this one, the 2014, I have 25 complaints for the entire year, for 2015 I have 36 complaints on veterinarians for the entire year, and for 2016 I have 26 complaints on veterinarians. It's unbelievable, Madam Speaker, that we are taking the governance away from the veterinarian society.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article out of the *Edmonton Journal* dated June 2013 that's titled B.C. Rejects Northern Gateway; Says Environmental Concerns Were Not Adequately Addressed.

The Deputy Speaker: Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a number of letters that continue to pour in regarding rural crime, this one from Sandra in Spruce View. They are in fear for the safety of their homes, their farms, their small businesses, and now their own lives. They've had violent offenders on their property.

Another one is from Gary in Markerville, Alberta, on a similar situation. He's happy that the UCP is setting up a rural crime task force. They've had a number of violent offences in their area.

Here's another one. Madam Speaker – they just keep coming in – from Vince and Wanda from Red Deer County: “We cannot do anything to protect ourselves without being criminally charged,” it seems.

Finally, the last item I have to table, Madam Speaker, is a newspaper article from Andrew Coyne of the *Vancouver Sun*: Kenney Channels Albertan Angst: Province Entitled to Feel Alienated. He says that “there is every reason to think he reflects the public mood in Alberta.”

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Vermilion-Lloydminster, very quickly.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a number of documents to table that I referenced in my speech last night on Bill 31. The first is a letter dated August 14, 2017, from the president of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association to the Minister of Labour.

The second is another letter, dated August 14, 2017, from the president of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association to the Minister of Service Alberta.

The third is a letter dated November 2, 2017, a response from the Minister of Service Alberta to the president of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association.

The fourth is an e-mail from Kim Blomme, a registered veterinary technologist who made comment with regard to informed consent and fee disclosure.

3:00

The fifth is from Penny Radostits, an e-mail in which she discusses the importance of not allowing advertising of veterinary fees and the degradation of the veterinary practice it creates.

The sixth is from Dr. Skylar Bieleny, which I quoted at the conclusion of my speech last night.

The final item is an article which I quoted from, a poll from Insights West, that indicates that according to a 2016 survey, the veterinary profession is the third most trusted profession in Canada and, interestingly, politicians are the least trusted.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, do you wish to make a motion? We have a number of tablings still remaining, but we're out of time.

Mr. Mason: Oh. I would move that we continue with the Routine, please.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: I will recognize the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a short tabling today. This one is an article from a well-known journalist, Mr. Rex Murphy, regarding the little bit of a tiff that's going on between the Alberta and B.C. governments and social licence. I have the requisite number of copies.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thanks, Madam Speaker. I have a tabling to do. This is an article in the *Toronto Star* by Chantal Hébert: Nation-building Pitch Not Working for Pipeline. It's about a tweet by the Saskatchewan Premier, Brad Wall, and some people also say the best Premier Alberta has right now. He tweeted that “Montreal should hand back the equalization money it has been receiving, part

of which comes from wealth generated by Western Canada's oil and gas industries.” It also says in this article, you know, that “in the face of mounting Quebec opposition to the Energy East pipeline, the TransCanada plan to link the oilfields of Western Canada to the refineries of the Atlantic region . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Just do the tabling, hon. member. Continue, please.

Mr. Gill: . . . is not officially dead but it is, at best, on life support.” Here are the copies.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite copies of an article by Don Braid from the *Calgary Herald* on February 23, 2017: Numbers Spell Trouble for NDP Government. This is with respect to an article that we used about how more money is being paid out from the carbon tax than is being received over the course of the year, and that it's not doing anything to win social licence.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw – sorry. Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: I didn't want to talk until I was recognized, Madam Clerk – Madam Speaker. Now I definitely apologize, with no disrespect to the Clerk. There. That was awkward.

I have a tabling. It's entitled NEB Cancels Pipeline Hearings in Montreal; Quebec City a Go, from August 2016. It deals with the track record of pipeline hearings leading to negative results.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm tabling an article from the *Edmonton Journal* by James Wood. He was talking about the Saskatchewan Premier warning that the oil patch was under siege by activists. Premier Brad Wall visited Calgary at that time, and he mentioned: “We're in the middle of a battle and, frankly, we haven't been winning too many battles. By we, I mean this sector and the resource importance of Western Canada.” As you know, Brad Wall has been the champion for western Canada in defending the industry. They indicated that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Just table the document, please, hon. member.

Any other tablings? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an article by James Wood of the *Calgary Herald*: Activists a Threat to Oilpatch, Wall Warns; Slams National Carbon Tax Idea, Obstacles to Major Energy Projects. He warns that “the energy industry is under ‘existential threat’ from environmental activists.”

The Deputy Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have two articles to table. One is from the *Globe and Mail* – A Search for Social Licence in a Deep Well of Distrust – in which the author searches for the bureau of social licence, discovers a lot of disinformation, misinformation, and deep distrust.

The second one is from our national spokesman Mr. Rex Murphy. The article is Will it Be Paris or Calgary? Quite frankly, it says that the two agendas are not compatible, and he concludes by saying that “killing the pipelines under any guise – safety, social licence, upstream emissions – is the sly path to killing the oilsands.” That’s what this government is up to, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other tablings? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today with the requisite number of copies of an article from the *National Post*. The headline reads Notley Learns Hard Truth About Social Licence. I’ll just read one line. “Notley would have had more success chasing a moonbeam than satisfying social licence.”

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I table the copies necessary. It’s an article by Chantal Hébert, that “so-called social licence for such projects is a pipe dream” and that “advocates are urging the prime minister to use the declaratory power . . . to declare a work to be for ‘the general advantage of Canada.’”

Thank you.

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

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the requisite copies of a *Vancouver Sun* article quoting former federal minister David Emerson where he talks about expressing cynicism over the concept of social licence.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Grande Prairie-Smoky, you have a tabling?

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’d like to table an article here by Chris Varcoe in the *Calgary Herald* on the 12th of May, 2017, entitled Alberta Must Devise a Plan to Handle Pipeline Politics. In it he quotes Mark Scholz who says, “It was incredibly naive . . . we have to go back to the drawing board, because obviously the strategy didn’t work.” And that’s in reference to the carbon tax and social licence.

I have one other article here to table, too. This is by Chris Nelson in the *Calgary Herald* on May 20, 2017. The title is Taking the High Road Will Get Alberta Nowhere; Preventing Power from Shifting West Is Part of the DNA of Federal Liberals. And he says, “It’s time Alberta’s . . . light bulb switcheroo crew made a quick stop at the Rachel Notley household. Because, for someone who seems so smart, our premier . . .”

The Deputy Speaker: Just table the document, please, hon. member.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewable, pursuant to the Regulated Forestry Profession Act the College of Alberta Professional Foresters annual report 2016-17 and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists annual report 2016-17.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we had two points of order. I believe, hon. Government House Leader, that you are doing a point of privilege rather than a point of order?

Mr. Mason: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Point of order, then. Hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, did you wish to proceed?

Point of Order Members’ Statements

Mr. Nixon: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly (j), language of an abusive nature or likely to create disorder. During a member’s statement today – I should have the sheet in front of me. I don’t know the hon. member’s constituency.

An Hon. Member: Edmonton-South West, I think.

Mr. Nixon: Edmonton-South West.

The member’s statement was in regard to some comments or the interpretation of those comments in regard to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

I rise because, Madam Speaker, members’ statements – I’m going to refer to a couple of things here – should not be used as a personal attack, and clearly in those statements it was a direct personal attack against the member. Now, the hon. member in his member’s statement, I believe, was very mistaken and has taken the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka’s comments in debate earlier in this House completely out of context and has chosen to cherry-pick one portion of a full speech. That aside, it’s fine to have a discussion within this place about policy or different concerns with party policy or government policy, but to take a direct attack at a member in a member’s statement I would argue is inappropriate.

3:10

I would refer you to rulings and comments made by Speaker Zwozdesky in the past. One ruling I would like to draw your attention to can be found in *Alberta Hansard* on November 29, 2012, page 1171, in which the Speaker says:

I just want to remind you again that members’ statements are not to be used for personal attacks, nor are they to [use] language that might cause disruption or disorder.

I mean, how far we’ve come, Madam Speaker. I agree.

In addition to that, on May 31, 2012, on page 140, the Speaker goes on to say:

I would ask you to review in your good conscience what the purpose of Members’ Statements really is. It is not an opportunity to stand up and deride or throw derogatory comments at another member. That is not what it’s all about.

Clearly, that is what the member did with his member’s statement today, and I think he should apologize for that and withdraw his comments.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With respect to this matter I would first draw the member’s attention to rules that suggest that members’ statements are not subject to interruption or to points of order.

Nevertheless, I will deal as well with the allegation that this was a personal attack. Madam Speaker, what took place – and I have the member’s statement here from the hon. member. He clearly deals with the content of some comments made by the Member for

Lacombe-Ponoka during debate on the bill that would deal with the regulation of legalized cannabis here in the House, and he was making comments with respect to those particular words.

To suggest, I think, that we are not permitted in this House in members' statements, in question period, or in debate to question and challenge the authority of comments that are made by other members, to challenge their logic, or to suggest that they in some way were inappropriate or, in fact, insulting to other individuals would be to rule out the use of freedom of speech in this Assembly almost entirely. Quite frankly, on all sides of the House that is a fundamental aspect of the debate that takes place here. This is a debate about ideas, about words, about the positions of other members and of other parties, and that is in the very nature of the work we do here.

I would just caution that to suggest that a member's statement that simply deals with objecting to another member's comments, to their tone, and to whether or not they were appropriate or may have been hurtful to some individual or group is, I think, hardly worth considering as a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Do any other members wish to speak to the point of order?

If not, I am prepared to make a ruling. Certainly, the precedent is that members' statements are not used to levy personal attacks. You referenced a couple of rulings from Speaker Zwozdesky. I have another one from Speaker Kowalski in 2010, found on page 1755 of *Hansard*, where he makes the comment that although giving a wide latitude, members needed to "discipline themselves" with regard to members' statements and "deal with policy matters and not personalities." That's quite clear there. He also reinforces that "civility, decorum, respect are very important" and that members' statements are "not an opportunity for someone to personally attack someone else." Certainly, these are serious matters, and members' statements should not be ever used for that.

Then the question is if this particular member's statement was a personal attack. I did listen to it quite closely, and I weighed whether it was directed at the individual. But I also heard the member referring to constituents and how they had felt about some of the comments, so it felt to me that he was reflecting a viewpoint that he had heard from other members of that community and was not himself engaging in a personal attack against that member. However, the line was very, very close, and the language used and the topic was, as I say, coming very close to the line.

While I'm not going to find it as a point of order this time, I think all members really have to be careful about how members' statements are used. In fact, Speaker Kowalski in his ruling back in 2010 made the point that there could be a case to have members' statements completely removed from the routine if members were not being respectful of each other in the ways they're presented. I would caution all members to really be aware of this in the members' statements that they are giving.

Thank you.

I'm prepared to hear the point of privilege at this point.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. At 2:50 p.m. today, just at the start of question period and just at the conclusion of Members' Statements, the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo looked across at the Member for Edmonton-South West, who had just completed the member's statement that was referred to in the previous point of order, and at that time he made a threatening gesture to the Member for Edmonton-South West,

which I can only interpret as a deliberate attempt to intimidate him. This was not just seen by me; it was seen by a number of members as well.

With respect to privileges I rise under Standing Order 15(5), that says that "a Member may always raise a question of privilege in the Assembly immediately after the words are uttered or the events occur that give rise to the question, in which case the written notice required under suborder (2) is not required." This being the first opportunity on the Order Paper to raise this matter, I do so now.

In *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* by Maingot it is stated that Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any Member on the floor of the House or while he is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament.

That's at page 230.

It goes on to say:

Any attempt by improper means to influence or obstruct a Member in his parliamentary work may constitute contempt. What constitutes an improper means of interfering with Members' parliamentary work is always a question depending on the facts of each case. Finally, there must be some connection between the material alleged to contain the interference and the parliamentary proceeding.

Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice discusses intimidation on page 146 and states:

To attempt to intimidate a Member in his parliamentary conduct by threats is also a contempt, cognate to those mentioned above. Actions of this character which have been proceeded against include impugning the conduct of Members and threatening them with further exposure if they took part in debates; threatening to communicate with Members' constituents to the effect that, if they did not reply to a questionnaire, they should be considered as not objecting to certain sports; publishing posters containing a threat regarding the voting of Members in a forthcoming debate; informing Members that to vote for a particular bill would be regarded as treasonable by a future administration; summoning a Member to a disciplinary hearing of his trade union in consequence of a vote given in the House; and threatening to end investment by a public corporation in a Member's constituency, if the Member persisted in making speeches along the lines of those in a preceding debate.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice by O'Brien and Bosc goes into the most detail, beginning on page 108 in chapter 3.

Over the years, Members have regularly brought to the attention of the House instances which they believed were attempts to obstruct, impede, interfere, intimidate or molest them, their staffs or individuals who had some business with them or the House. In a technical sense, such actions are considered to be contempts of the House and not breaches of privilege.

3:20

It goes on to quote Speaker Bosley from a 1986 ruling.

If an Hon. Member is impeded or obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts or other improper behaviour, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege. Should an Hon. Member be able to say that something has happened which prevented him or her from performing functions, that he or she has been threatened, intimidated, or in any way unduly influenced, there would be a case for the Chair to consider.

Further, he says:

In order to find a prima facie breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly

related to a proceeding in Parliament. In some cases where prima facie privilege has not been found, the rulings have focused on whether or not the parliamentary functions of the Member were directly involved. While frequently noting that Members raising such matters have legitimate grievances, Speakers have consistently concluded that Members have not been prevented from carrying out their parliamentary duties.

At page 110:

In circumstances where Members claim to be physically obstructed, impeded, interfered with or intimidated in the performance of their parliamentary functions, the Speaker is apt to find that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred.

Incidents involving physical obstruction – such as traffic barriers, security cordons and union picket lines either impeding Members' access to the Parliamentary Precinct or blocking their free movement . . . as well as occurrences of physical assault or molestation . . .

Madam Speaker, there are certainly more precedents, but I do want to just indicate that there is no question, in my view, that the gesture made by the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was meant to intimidate the Member for Edmonton-South West as a result of the member's statement which he had just delivered, where he expressed the unhappiness of the Chinese community with respect to some of the debate that had taken place earlier by the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

As such, Madam Speaker, I would ask that you find that there has been a prima facie breach of privilege by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and that we would then prepare a motion to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader for the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I mean, I'm in a bit of a position where I did not see what was taking place at that time because it was behind me and I was also, if the time is right, rising to ask a question.

I think a point of privilege is a serious thing to bring before this House and as such would ask that we will present my response to that tomorrow if possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the matter? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: The citation under 15(4) is that "if the Member whose conduct is called into question is not present," which is the case today, "the matter shall be deferred to the next day that the Member is present unless the Speaker rules that" it must be dealt with right now.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, it appears that under the circumstances it would be appropriate, then, to defer the matter to allow time to discuss it with the member and deal with it tomorrow.

Orders of the Day

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(2) to allow the Assembly to move immediately to consideration of second reading of Bill 216, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2017.

I'd further like to ask unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 77(1) to allow us to debate second reading of Bill 216, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2017.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. We have to separate that into two questions. Could you just repeat the first one that you're seeking unanimous consent for?

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(2) to allow the Assembly to move immediately to consideration of second reading of Bill 216, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2017.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Deputy Speaker: The second matter, please.

Mr. Nixon: I further would like to ask unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 77(1) to allow us to debate second reading of Bill 216, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2017.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I've been advised that that is not relevant now that unanimous consent was denied for the first one. It's just a process matter, but thank you for going with that. We'll move on.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 31

A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act

Mr. Loewen moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment December 5: Mr. van Dijken speaking]

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to continue to speak towards a referral amendment prepared for Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. I had spoken earlier in the day with regard to concerns about Bill 31 and some of the changes happening with respect to AMVIC.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I was speaking with regard to some communication that I had received from a constituent of mine, Dr. Collin Lawrence, a doctor of veterinarian medicine, and the concerns that he had with regard to that the government was going down a dangerous road, where not all aspects of the commercial world need to be interpreted and applied to the medical world. His concerns are that where the veterinary medicine has many pillars to it, two very important pillars are a valid client-patient relationship and also the responsible stewardship of antibiotics. His letter goes on to talk at length with regard to some of the concerns. He points out many aspects of why the changes to the Veterinary Profession Act contained in Bill 31 would be not in the best interests of the practice of veterinary medicine in Alberta. He points out that the highest standards of veterinary medicine are developed by veterinarians and veterinary technologists and that these standards help to safeguard the public

interest but not only the public interest but animal health and welfare.

It's very important that we recognize that this is a medical profession and that we recognize the intricacies in performing that profession and how it is critical that animal health and welfare be considered as more than just a consumer product and that it's not brought in where we just consider it a commodification of the practice.

He talks about the degradation of veterinary care resulting possibly from aggressive marketing and pricing, and that's part of the concerns within other letters that I have received, where veterinarians are more than just selling services; they are an integral part to the animal well-being throughout Alberta, in the urban centres and in the rural centres. The changes to the veterinary act that are being proposed have the potential to degrade the quality of veterinary care in some commercial livestock operations, which could create potential risks to food safety. Having raised livestock myself, the relationship that the producer and the veterinary share in ensuring that the livestock are maintained with proper usage of medical practice and proper usage and application of medicines and antibiotics and such is critical to food safety within Alberta and throughout Canada.

3:30

I would also like to point out that based on some of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association's documents for their annual report for 2016, they received a total of 30 complaints. Thirty complaints. They have over 3,200 registered veterinarians practising in Alberta. Thirty complaints would be less than 1 per cent of registered members, but more importantly these registered members are possibly performing hundreds of procedures throughout the year. It's a very small number of complaints: 30 in an entire year for 3,200 registered doctors. Of those 30 complaints there was only a need to forward three complaint letters to their Complaint Review Committee.

I do believe that this is trying to identify a problem that does not necessarily exist, and the risk that we have to the high standards that are being implemented within the veterinarian medical profession in Alberta – it's not worth it to make these amendments to the Veterinary Profession Act, the amendments that are contained in Bill 31. That's why it's incredibly important to have open and transparent discussions and bring that to committee so that those that are involved in the practice and the veterinary association have the ability to bring forward in an open and transparent way the concerns that they have with these amendments to the act.

Putting veterinarians under ministerial control instead of keeping them self-regulated could be a bad precedent, and I would hope that this government does not see it as possibly being used for other self-regulating bodies. Veterinarians are concerned about the damage that this could do to their professional reputation and their image since there have been no scandals or concerns that would warrant the profession being put on the same level – as we see in Bill 31, they're being lumped in even with the high-credit lenders.

Bill 31 also includes event tickets. Bill 31 seeks to establish a legal requirement for secondary sellers to refund consumers in instances where tickets are unable to be used due to refusal. However, the minister is empowered to exempt certain sellers from this provision.

It's interesting. This morning I was reading in the *Globe and Mail* an article with regard to the province of Ontario and some of the policies they're hoping to move forward with. In that article it did talk some on how refunding consumers the price of a ticket does not necessarily bring it to a place of satisfaction for the individual that has been victimized. The experience is lost and also, possibly,

the effort that it takes to go to the event and to make the effort to bring others to an event. This is not going to be able to be refunded to the consumers.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a concern, too, with the direction that the minister is taking with the veterinary profession. I'd like to reference the press release that the minister put out on November 29, 2017, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses, and I'm going to quote from it because I think that this is important.

A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act would support a level playing field for businesses and improve protections for Albertans making big purchases like buying or repairing a car, buying concert tickets, taking out a loan or getting medical care for their pets.

That seems out of place in this press release. The items that she's describing here really don't seem to be in sync with the health of animals.

But let's go a little further here.

If passed, the bill would also empower shoppers with more information and put bad actors on notice, with strong recourse for consumers if a transaction goes wrong.

You could only assume that "bad actors" applies to making big purchases, buying or repairing a car, buying concert tickets, taking out a loan, and getting medical care for your pet. That means that we can actually more or less say that the minister, like what she did with AMVIC, stating that it's a gong show, is more or less saying that there are significant problems with veterinarians as bad actors, if you will, and that the profession isn't doing a good enough job in regulating itself. I think that we can jump to that conclusion.

We got a quote from her. I'll be quick because I do want to get to my question here to the hon. member.

Albertans deserve a government that looks out for their [best] interests. That's why we are strengthening consumer protections to make life more affordable. And we are bringing in smart rules to support businesses, because they should not be undermined by bad actors [who] don't play by the rules. Bottom line, stronger protections boost consumer confidence, and that's [what's] good for business.

Let's be clear. They're talking about our veterinarians.

I also take offence here that it also is mentioning people that I have a great deal of respect for. You know, car dealerships: the salespeople have been nothing but respectful to me. My local mechanics have been nothing but respectful to me. Even though I will tell you that I have never had to use a high-interest loan, I am certain that those individuals stay within the rules that are given to them. There are some examples that show that there is always a point in every profession when somebody does, maybe, something that is questionable, but that is why you let the industry deal with them because – you know what? – the last thing you want is the industry to be tarnished because of a bad apple, if you will.

To the member: do you feel that veterinarians should be lumped in as bad actors that need to be put on notice?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, and thank you for the question. You know, I alluded to the relationship that as a livestock producer for over 20 years we had with our veterinarian. It becomes a relationship that is in the best interests of our operation but also in the best interests of our livestock and the best interests of all Albertans or those that are going to be consuming the food product

that we produce. It's important to recognize the professionalism that is brought forward by these individuals. I, from the time that I started in the production of livestock, found it extremely helpful that I was able to develop a relationship with my veterinarian on regular visits. The veterinarian didn't just necessarily come to our farm when we had an incident, whether that was a sick animal or others; they came for regular checks to help us with our health protocols, to ensure that we were able to . . .

3:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Just a reminder to the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. If you could table tomorrow what you've read to the House today, that would be appreciated.

Mr. Cyr: Sorry. Which one?

The Acting Speaker: The press release.

Mr. Cyr: I can.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Minister of Status of Women and Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to the referral amendment. There seems to be a lot of misinformation being communicated throughout this House as well as outside of this House, so I would like to take another opportunity, in addition to the comments that I made upon introduction of second reading, to provide further clarification.

First of all, the bill makes very clear upon the face of it that the legislation only applies to household pets. Livestock is not included. It seems that I need to reiterate this a number of times because despite the clarity in the legislation, on the very face of it, which specifically says household pets, there may be confusion of individuals as to whether or not a horse constitutes a household pet. I assure you, Madam Speaker, that that is not the case. Animals that are raised for the use of food in our food chain are also not contemplated, again, as household pets would not constitute part of livestock or our food chain.

This piece of legislation, in respect of veterinarians, which seems to be the turning point for the referral amendment, from the comments that I've heard, is quite simple, Madam Speaker. It does two things. One, it requires veterinarians to disclose all fees and obtain a client's consent prior to treating their household pets. And it seems to me that the association agrees with us. They have said that this is something that is a best practice of their profession, that this is something that they want veterinarians to do. So it seems to me that it would be very simple for vets who are acting with the highest of integrity and in good practices, as – I agree with members opposite – they are, to do this. No problem. Okay.

Then the next piece is with respect to giving permission to veterinarians to advertise or post their fees. Now, this is a simple matter of transparency. I think that the value of transparency is something that we can all get behind. Madam Speaker, the assertion that somehow the ability to post or advertise fees would degrade a profession, I think, is a comment that is unsettling to a number of professionals, lawyers included, as lawyers, in fact, are permitted to advertise and post their fees, yet there's no suggestion and it would be inappropriate to suggest that that would somehow suggest a degradation.

Furthermore, I completely agree. The vets that I've dealt with: many if not most, you know, the vast majority are very honest,

upstanding. They take the highest standard of ethics to heart, they put their patients first, and they want good outcomes. I certainly don't buy the suggestion that by allowing them to advertise, they would somehow put their ethics aside and they would put the quality of care aside simply because they're not allowed to post their fees. Certainly, if somebody were to suggest to me as a lawyer that in my practice I would put aside my ethics simply because I am allowed to post my fees, I would be offended, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, this is a good thing for consumers. Madam Speaker, I've heard from Albertans, I've heard from individuals who are afraid to take their pet to a vet because they have zero clue of what costs they could incur if they walk in the door. This kind of concern can lead to negligence on the part of a pet owner in not taking their loved pet in for good care because they're so paralyzed by the fees.

This is just good information, arming individuals with more information so that they can make the best, most informed decision. I wouldn't suggest that anyone would put aside the quality of care of their loved one and just engage in a race to the bottom, Madam Speaker. I don't think that that does justice to the conscience of most Albertans and most pet owners, who want the best for their loved ones. I am speaking against this referral. The comments made by the members on the other side of the House just don't hold water in this regard.

You know, another consideration is that we talk about the medical profession in the United States, which is entirely privatized. Doctors operating on humans advertise their fees. Again, I think that they would likely take umbrage at the assertion that their advertising of fees causes their services to be degraded in some way. This really just gives the owners of their loved pets more tools to be able to make a well-educated decision so that they can find quality of care – all vets are going to give that quality of care; I believe the member opposite when he says that – but also be able to find that quality of care within their budget and not have surprises.

There are many good protections in this legislation, Madam Speaker. We've heard from a number of our stakeholders, and they have told us that they are in support of this. You know, just briefly I will quote Janet Riopel, the president and CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. She said:

Consumer confidence and fair competition are essential for a vibrant and healthy economy. Businesspeople understand this, and the vast majority treat their customers fairly. The Chamber hosted sessions . . .

They were lovely.

. . . to ensure our members' voices were heard through these consultations.

She says:

This legislation shows that government was listening, and we're confident it will foster even greater trust between consumers and the business community.

They know that's good for business. The people who are at the front lines of this know and appreciate that.

There were some comments, too, about automotive repair. Our legislation is supported by a small-business owner, for example, the owner of Sandy Lane auto. It's supported by the Alberta Motor Association, which is very trusted in Alberta. They've said, "We believe all Albertans should have confidence in the service they're receiving." You know, they've got a long history of standards that make them the experts, really, on the voice of this. I would encourage the members opposite to listen to the experts.

Bill Burnett, the chair of the AMVIC Board of Directors, has said:

I am very excited about the announcement of Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act. It is a very important

step to support AMVIC's mandate of consumer protection in Alberta. Thank you to the Government of Alberta for their leadership and commitment to consumer protection in Alberta.

You know, the opposition speaks of listening to the experts. The evidence on this, the support that we have for this legislation from the experts, shows just that. I would suggest that they should take their own advice on this matter, Madam Speaker, and that they should support this bill.

There are certainly protections with respect to ticket sales, Madam Speaker, the issue of bots. Yes, this is a very complicated issue, software buying up tickets. It's said time and time again in every bit of ink spilled on this issue that it's a complicated issue, that there is no simple solution. But we are in the forefront of this issue here in Alberta; this has not been done in Canada previously. Certainly, we will be watching the situation. But these are first steps. We have support from the music industry on this, from artists. We have support from their promoters. We have support from primary sellers. This is truly a team effort. We are taking different enforcement steps than have been tried in the United States. We are taking different enforcement steps than are being proposed in Ontario. We feel that this is a made-in-Alberta solution. We have a different market here in Alberta. It's smaller than what you see in Ontario, so it requires a unique approach.

3:50

I just want to touch again on the veterinary piece of this legislation. We consulted. We had two in-person meetings with the association. We had an additional phone call with the association. I'm told that this is, in fact, more consultation than what was done when there was the amalgamation of the technologists and the vets. You know, there was good and substantial consultation. We're very clear on the position. We've also spoken to individual vets, Madam Speaker, and we've heard support from individuals vets. We also have spoken to pet owners, and pet owners are very pleased with these changes.

Madam Speaker, there have also been some comments from the members opposite suggesting that putting vets into this legislation somehow by association is insulting. I don't think that that's a fair comment to make with respect to those who regulate auto sales and repairs. I don't think it's a fair thing to say to those who sell new or used vehicles. I think that those comments really bring down the level of discourse when we're talking about Alberta's businesses and Alberta's small businesses, the contributors to our very economy. They drive so much of our economy. They're quite pleased that we are taking action on those grey areas where there are those who bring down the reputation of various industries.

Some of these pieces in this legislation, Madam Speaker, touch on a wide range of industries, touch almost every industry. There are provisions in here with respect to contract terms. Now, there are so many industries that engage in contracts as part of their business operations. To suggest that they're bad company for vets, that, you know, 99 per cent of Alberta's businesses would be bad company for vets to keep, is, in my view and my colleagues' here, not something that we would ever say. We support Alberta's businesses. We support Alberta's small businesses. They're pleased with the action that's being taken here because, overall, this legislation will increase consumer confidence, which is good for the bottom line. It brings up the overall level of discourse.

Madam Speaker, we've heard from the opposition about wanting to remove, quote, red tape. There is red tape on the veterinary profession. Not being able to advertise or post your fees is red tape. Those businesses are not able to operate their business in the fashion that they see fit. Now, I understand that there has been, you know, some discussion through the association from a number of

their members on this issue, but I have heard from vets that they would like the opportunity to be able to be more open and transparent with their consumers, that this would be good for consumers, being able to post their fees, which they're prohibited from doing at the moment. We're removing that prohibition and giving more flexibility. Obviously, they're not required. It's very clear on the face of the legislation that they won't be required to advertise their fees, that they won't be required to post them. These are additional freedoms.

Much of this legislation, frankly, deals with improving freedom of speech for Albertans. There are pieces in here that have to do with the ability to post an online review, Madam Speaker, without being able to be threatened with intimidation by a business because they simply do not like an honest but good-faith review. These are principles that we hold dear: principles of free speech, principles of access to information, principles of being able to make good, informed choices.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Under 29(2)(a), hon. member?

Dr. Starke: No, not under 29(2)(a).

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

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to ask if it would be acceptable to the other members of the Legislature if we would temporarily revert to introductions to introduce some members in the gallery.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce some of the members of one of our largest and strongest unions here in Alberta and a union I was very proud to be part of as an LPN. Vice-president Mike Dempsey and the political action committee, if you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 31

A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, you had to expect that after the minister's rambling diatribe there was a going to be a response. You know, it's interesting because this is a debate on referral, and the purpose of the referral in this case is to allow for the consultation that did not happen. It would allow for the minister to actually meet with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, which she refused to do. It would allow for multiple

dialogues on a number of different things that are located within this bill, but I'm going to confine myself to some of the comments made by the minister and by others with regard to the bill.

Now, the minister stood up. She stood up last night, and she said it again just now, that this bill would only deal with household pets. Well, if it only deals with household pets, why doesn't it say that in the bill? Nowhere in the bill is the phrase "household pet." The phrase in the bill is "in respect of a domestic cat or dog or other specified type of domestic animal." Cows are domestic animals. Pigs are domestic animals. Horses, sheep, goats, elk are domestic animals. The minister says "household pets." If that's what she means, "household pets" should appear in the bill, not a wide-open domestic animal definition. If that's what you're talking about, that's what needs to be in the bill.

That is part of the reason why it's important that referral be done, so that we can take another look at this bill to get the proper language. [interjections] Right now, the minister's . . .

The Acting Speaker: My apologies, hon. member. There's a lot of talking back and forth. If we could please just allow the member to speak to this referral amendment.

Thank you.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If the intention is to talk about household pets, then let's have that language in the bill. Right now the bill allows cabinet to designate which domestic animals are included, and you can understand the members of the Veterinary Medical Association – I'm sorry; I will respectfully disagree with the Minister of Service Alberta – who were not properly consulted. The consultation was a shadow of the consultation that was consulted with the Minister of Labour on the bringing together of the associations. To suggest that there's confidence within the veterinary profession for cabinet taking over the definition of what constitutes a domestic animal under this bill – that confidence has been shattered by the actions of this minister.

Now, the next little thing that I found interesting was: rely on your experts. Remember that we heard that phrase: rely on your experts. Who exactly are the experts when we're talking about veterinary medicine? Is it cabinet? Is it the Minister of Service Alberta?

4:00

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that the experts in this field are, in fact, veterinarians. Veterinarians have come out in large numbers and have written to this minister, have written to me, have written to most of the members, I would suggest, here in the Chamber and have indicated their displeasure with this bill. They've been very clear on that. This bill takes a direct attack at the self-regulating nature of our profession, and it takes a direct attack on our ability to govern ourselves and to decide not only what is best for our profession but what is best for the welfare and health of animals in Alberta. That is a responsibility that we have had since Alberta became a province, and it is a responsibility we take very, very seriously.

Now, the minister mentioned a concern about transparency on costs and that there were some people who were scared to go through the door of a veterinary clinic for fear of what it might cost. What a ridiculous statement. What a ridiculous statement. Unlike some businesses – lawyers, I would point out – we don't start charging people the minute they walk through the door. We provide lots of free advice, whether it be on the phone or over the counter, and if somebody wants to know what a veterinary procedure will cost, we provide that information willingly over the phone. Every veterinary hospital that I've ever been associated with has dealt with

what we call price shoppers. There are price shoppers that are there every day, people that ask for the price of a service. But whenever we got a call from a price shopper, what we did was engage in a conversation with that person to let them know what was included in the price, what sort of procedures we took, what protocols were included so that they understood exactly what it was that they were purchasing.

You know, Madam Speaker, I started a veterinary practice in 1983. In 1983 performing general, routine surgery, things like spays and neuters of dogs and cats, was very different from what it was when I retired in 2011. In some ways I am so very glad that our profession moved forward over that period of time, and it has moved forward since. I would never do a spay or a neuter today the way I did it in 1983 – never – because it would be not the best care for the patient.

Now, have those changes resulted in additional costs? Yes, they have. Those changes to the way we do things in the operating theatre, in the examination room: those things cost money, and they have increased the cost of veterinary care. There's no question; there has been an increase in the cost of veterinary care. But there has been a commensurate increase in the quality of veterinary care, and when the price gets driven down, so does the quality. Price competition, whether it's in veterinary medicine or in other fields, results in a decrease in quality. That has been the experience in every other jurisdiction that has allowed the advertising of veterinary fees. That is what has happened in British Columbia, that is happening in Ontario, and it has happened in multiple jurisdictions in the United States where that has been done.

Now, you can call it a better practice because of transparency, you can call it a number of different things, but in reality it results in the degradation of practice. It results in the degradation of procedures. It is not in the best interests of, certainly, veterinary medicine, it is not in the best interests of the client, but most importantly it's not in the best interests of the patient. The patient cannot speak. Who speaks for the patient? Who is the patient's advocate? In most cases that is the owner, but in many cases the owner does not have the knowledge or the information to know what is best for the patient. That knowledge, that information comes from the veterinarian through his or her training and experience.

Clients come to us asking for our recommendation based on what is called Aesculapian authority. Aesculapian authority is a term used in the medical profession and also the veterinary medical profession, and it indicates the authority we hold because of our knowledge, because of our experience. Just like a lawyer or an accountant or another professional has authority and knowledge in their field that we rely on, veterinarians have knowledge that we apply in our situation. That knowledge, Madam Speaker, is gained over time, it is gained at a great personal cost, and that knowledge has value.

Over the years that I was in practice, yes, things became more expensive, but those fees were to cover better quality veterinary medicine. Those fees were to do better sedation, better anaesthesia, better intra- and postoperative pain control, for better materials that were less reactive for the patient. They allowed for intravenous monitoring and intravenous support of the patient.

When I first graduated, in 1983, we didn't put dogs on IVs for spays. Unbelievable. Today I would never pay a dog without an IV line, but in 1983 that was okay. That meant that the procedure was cheaper in 1983. If you want to make a procedure significantly cheaper, you have to cut corners. There is no other way to do it.

Now, the concern over costs is not one that is foreign to veterinarians. We deal with the need to balance the owner's ability to pay with the cost of providing the service every day, Madam

Speaker. In our situation we've come up with a lot of different ways to help owners with that. We encourage owners to take pet health insurance, which is widely available, to shield them against the shock of a large veterinary bill. We have started four different charities in Alberta that provide financial assistance to clients who require assistance for veterinary care. Four different charities exist in Alberta. They all have significant veterinary involvement. We want to be able to help our clients treat their animals. We provide tens of thousands of dollars every year in pro bono work, stuff that we do for free or at severe discounts just because we care about our patients, we care about our clients, and we want to do what's best for them.

While this minister says that this isn't an attack on veterinarians, maybe you should ask the veterinarians how they feel about it. I will tell you that from the hundreds of letters I have received, we feel under attack. We feel that we've been targeted. We're the only self-regulating profession that's in this bill. Are doctors here? No. Are lawyers here? No. Are dentists or pharmacists or chiropractors or physiotherapists or geophysicists in this bill? No, none of them, but veterinarians are. Veterinarians are. Madam Speaker, you know, that is a problem.

Consultation is something that we value and we would like to see this minister undertake with us. That's why I'm in favour of referral. Referral will allow for a more robust discussion that lasts longer than a week. When I told my colleagues that this bill received first reading last Wednesday and that then it was to be passed by Thursday, their reaction uniformly was shock. "How can the government do this? How can the government, in the space of a week, turn around the way a profession has been operating in this province for 111 years?" When I told my colleagues that it can be done and that that's what is under way, they were shocked.

That is why I'm saying that if this bill is referred to committee, we at the very least have the opportunity to hear properly from veterinarians and, yes, hear from clients who feel that they would be better served by having fees advertised, and it would be an opportunity to have that dialogue and, in fact, discuss: why fee advertising? Where it has been tried in other jurisdictions, it has always been an unmitigated disaster. I'll say that again: an unmitigated disaster. Talk to veterinarians who practised in British Columbia through the '80s and the '90s and ask them what fee advertising did to their profession. Alberta veterinarians don't want that.

My colleagues have already stated what the level of complaints that we have to our association is. It's astronomically low. When one considers the number of veterinary transactions, the number of interactions that we have with clients and patients on an annual basis, the percentage involved is so minuscule.

4:10

Now, could we do better? Yes, and we strive to do better all the time. Our association has staff, has volunteer council members, has many, many members, myself included, who volunteer for discipline tribunals and practice review and practice inspection to try to always improve, to continuously improve veterinary practice in Alberta. That's what we try to do.

That's why we find this bill, brought in on such short notice, brought in for no explainable reason even though we asked – we asked the Minister of Labour and we asked the Minister of Service Alberta back in August: "What is the driving force behind this bill? Why does it feel that this is necessary?" We didn't get an answer from either one. Then the one answer we did get from the Minister of Service Alberta was that there would be extensive discussion, consultation, and engagement. Well, that hasn't happened. Also, we would much prefer, frankly, to deal with the Minister of Labour,

who is responsible for the Veterinary Profession Act, not the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Cooper: Why?

Dr. Starke: Well, that's a good question, one that has not been answered by either minister.

Madam Speaker, that is the reason I'm pushing for referral. That is the reason I speak in favour of referral, specifically with regard to the provisions within the Veterinary Profession Act. We are a proud profession. We work hard, and we have done nothing to earn the ire of this minister or to be targeted by this government in this way, but if they do want to proceed and steamroll the veterinary profession, I guess that's their prerogative. But I didn't think it would and I certainly had hoped it would not, Madam Speaker, come to that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think we all can learn from that member, seeing his passion for his profession. I think that anybody that has taken the time and put a lot of years into dedicating it to an industry – in my case, it would be accounting; for him, it's the veterinarian practice. I can tell you that when it comes to a government moving on a professional body that regulates a profession, that is an attack on an entire profession, and it is an attack on exactly what it is we are trying to prevent, which is creating red tape so that they can no longer do their job. To hear the minister say that we are reducing red tape by bringing in this legislation is preposterous.

I would like to hear a little bit more from the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster about how he feels that the minister can really justify this lack of consultation when it comes to such an important topic and say that 1,300 online surveys really will improve the ability for him to help the pets that are within his care.

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm happy to say that. I mean, my responsiveness within my practice was always to talk directly to my clients, and I encouraged that.

You know, it's interesting. One of the provisions in this bill is with regard to negative reviews online, and I actually support those provisions. I think those are a good idea. But just out of interest's sake, I went to the Facebook page of my practice, now my former practice, to see how they're doing. Of the 27 reviews they've received, 26 reviews are five star, and one is three star, averaging 4.9. I was proud of my colleagues. They are doing a good job, and they continue to do a good job.

You know, they don't need the provisions within here, but don't take it from me. For years the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association has had a public member on the board, and that is to protect the public interest. I received this quote from a public member.

As a 7 year Public Member of the . . . ABVMA – I can state without any bias – the current Act is working for Alberta's public. Veterinarians receive specific training about client relations/fees/records and other critical areas of professional communication/practice when they get their provisional licence. I note Public Member input for amendments was not sought in any form by the Minister of Service [Alberta]. Public Members are the eyes/ears for Alberta's self-regulated professions.

Minister, why didn't you pick up the phone and ask the public members that you've got sitting on the ABVMA board whether they have input into this? Why have we been singled out for this

treatment? Why have we been attacked? You can't tell me that accountants don't have big bills. You certainly can't tell me that lawyers don't have big bills. That seems to be the only criteria. The reason we have big bills is because of the quality of practice and the demands of the public.

The public want orthopaedic surgery. You know what? If you need your dog's hip replaced, you don't have to wait 10 months; you can get it done within the week. If you need nuclear scintigraphy on your dog, you can get it done within days. If you need to go see a specialist, you can have that done within days as well. That does cost money. I recognize that. But to suggest that there is price inflation and that somehow that is unfair to the general public – the general public are the people that are demanding these enhanced services.

I myself have been the consumer of these enhanced services in the past year, and, yes, they are expensive. You know what? They're worth every penny. They're worth every penny because my colleagues are professional, my colleagues provide value, my colleagues are in touch with clients, and they know what they're doing. They deserve it. They have earned that right, and they have the knowledge, the expertise, the dedication, and the experience to be able to provide that service, and I think they provide it not just for me but for all Albertans, and I would like them to be able to continue doing that in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, we are back on the referral. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to be able to rise in the House today to speak to the referral motion to Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act.

I don't think I'm going to be able to speak as eloquently about veterinarians as my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster. However, what I can say is that one thing that we don't do very often in this House is refer a piece of legislation to committee. It does seem a little odd that we don't do as much of that as we could be doing. Certainly, I think the committees have time for this kind of thing. I sit on one, and we haven't done anything together since, I think, the Alberta Standard Time Act, so I guess I would say that they're overrun with work. It really would prove to Albertans that the Legislature was very interested in getting to the bottom of the piece of legislation that was being sent on to committee, very interested in having folks that are affected by that particular bill be able to come and make submissions to the committee, make their points of what may be good about the legislation or bad about the legislation.

Don't get me wrong. At times the government has certainly spent time wording some questions that are available to those that wish to make submissions online. I am not sure if there was an online questionnaire about this bill or not, and it doesn't matter. The complaint, at least sometimes here on this side, about online consultation is that the outcome seems to be predetermined on some of the bills that actually do have online questions for consultation. We sometimes hear that the questions tend to lead the person submitting exactly where the government wants that person to end up. Far be it for me now to be accusatory. Those are just comments that I tend to hear. I would not be accusatory.

Back to the referral amendment. In this particular instance I believe that sending Bill 31 to committee for scrutiny by those that will be affected by the bill is the right thing to do. Considering the

vastness of this bill – ticket resale, automotive sales and repair, high-cost credit, AMVIC, and lastly but certainly not the least of the things that this bill covers, veterinary advertisement – there's definitely a lot of stuff to stick into one piece of legislation.

4:20

The bill actually makes several changes to the Fair Trading Act, including changing the name of the act to the consumer protection act. Speaking of the Fair Trading Act, let's just reflect for a moment. Bill 203, Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016, was introduced on March 17, 2016. Just over three weeks later this private member's bill was referred to committee. At the end of the day, the Standing Committee on Families and Communities heard from numerous stakeholders about Bill 203 and the effect that it would have and then recommended to the House that Bill 203 not proceed.

Now, that's what happens when a bill is referred to committee. I'm not being political here. I'm just suggesting that what should have happened to the bill in committee, one way or the other – I'm merely giving an example of what one of the potentialities of a bill going to the committee is. It's true that there is actually a chance that the bill will be found to be flawed in some way that affects the people that will be forced to adhere to it. Bill 203 was such an example. To be perfectly honest, when a bill is referred to committee and the public gets a chance to voice their opinions about that bill instead of answering a one-answer-only question on the Internet about the same bill and when the public has had their say, everyone in this House can be proud that they did the right thing.

My colleague from Livingstone-Macleod this morning gave a lengthy description of what leading questions may sound like. I don't believe that I can remember all of them. There was quite an eloquent little display. His point was that the questions asked probably didn't pertain to anything like what is in front of us, the people in the Legislature, in this bill. Average Albertans that are affected by this bill would not have been given the ability in any online survey to comment on portions of the bill that we see before us.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

When I go back to Bill 203, the people of the province and the people that were to be directly affected got to come in and face the committee to give their opinions, and because of what was heard in the case of Bill 203, the committee did the only thing it could. It recommended to the House that the bill not proceed any further. It didn't make it past second reading. Now, that appears to me to be democracy in action. Like I said, those of us in this Legislature can be proud of that particular action because it allowed Albertans to have a voice. It actually allowed Albertans to say, "No, this proposed legislation doesn't fit the bill," so to speak.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I sit on the committee that had Bill 203, the Alberta Standard Time Act, sent to it for input from Albertans. We had two or three sessions of Albertans that came before the committee – you were the chair of that – to express their concerns with the bill. Not only were everyday Albertans part of those meetings; we indeed had professional sports representatives in front of that committee as well giving their humble opinions as to what the time change could do to those professional sports in Alberta if the time were indeed changed. Now, there was a lot of discussion about that as we moved through committee. Those guys swung a pretty big bat. We certainly had letter after letter written to the committee, some in favour, some not.

That committee also went on the road to get input from Albertans from all over the province. Travelling around the province, taking a group of committee members along so that people could be heard

on an issue is a pretty big deal. There is a team that actually takes care of audio. You know, I hadn't thought about it too much, but of course *Hansard* has to be along on a trip like that in order to record all the input from Albertans when a committee is taken on the road like that.

Anyway, I sat in on one of the meetings when it was in the south. There were banks of audio equipment and microphones and on and on and certainly people in order to run all that equipment. It was done right. Don't get me wrong. Upon walking into that room in Lethbridge, I was impressed at the equipment and the operators of the equipment and the security officers that we see around here every day that were there to protect – I see my friend in the gallery – those of us that were listening and those that were participating, giving their opinions, and of course those who were running the equipment. I think that the travelling show went across Alberta and met in five areas. I could be wrong there. I think it was Calgary, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, here in Edmonton, and then Lethbridge. Five? [interjection] Oh, four. Okay. Was it not in Edmonton? I'm asking the Speaker. I shouldn't be doing that.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, there were four, and you know that. Thank you for correcting me. You know, as much as I didn't completely understand why we were travelling from one end of the province to the other to hear the opinions of everyday Albertans, it could certainly never be said that the committee didn't bend over backwards to get all possible input in order to make a decision for presentation to the Legislature. Of course, we all know what the outcome of the committee work resulted in, but, once again, Albertans got to voice their opinions. They got the chance to be part of a decision of this Legislature, and that really is what this is all about. Everyday Albertans or small businesses or corporations or businessmen, whatever bill it may be, whatever those folks feel about portions of whatever that bill may be, are in fact given the opportunity to give their opinions and, from what I found, actually facts about the bill in question.

Now, Bill 31, which covers all of those things that I mentioned earlier, also covers a consumer bill of rights portion. It's clear that a plain-language bill of rights would be created and publicized by the minister. As far as I can see, this will basically be a policy piece that does not contain any enforceable items but, rather, exists for consumers' use. Bottom line: it will turn out, I think, being an information piece, for lack of a better term. If indeed that is not the case, I would be happy to hear from the minister to explain the reasoning for this document. It appears to me that the minister already has the ability to draft a consumer bill of rights at any time that she wishes. I'm just not sure why it needs to be an act of the Legislature. So here we go once again. The government appears like it's trying to legislate a part of its job description. I've never understood why the minister just doesn't go ahead and move forward using the powers already granted.

Now, I've already mentioned that this is a vast bill with multiple sections in it. In all honesty, it's somewhat convoluted, I would say, a little bit of a convolution of different issues, some of which will likely not be fixed by this bill. Others such as aspects of the veterinary advertising: well, judging from the blowback from the industry and their concern over the lack of consultation on this bill, considering that we've heard probably 40 minutes of discussion about it from one of those very professionals that shares this House with us, it just seems to me that this is exactly why this bill should be sent off to committee and given the due discussion, something as broad reaching as this bill is.

While certain aspects of this bill have some merit, others seem to lack purpose. While I'm at the veterinary portion of this speech, I should say that I received an e-mail from a veterinarian in my riding yesterday. Now, upon speaking with her, this lady suggested that

the reason, she believed, to remove the section on advertising in Bill 31 is that it is unethical for veterinarians to be advertising professional medical fees. She continued and said that this would be considered unprofessional activity by their profession. They are professional medical doctors, and advertising service fees to the general public is not considered an activity appropriate for professional medical doctors to do. This is what the veterinarian from my riding said to me. It undermines their profession, she said, the professional requirements and code of conduct, and is considered by veterinarians to damage their professional reputation and credibility with the public as professionals.

4:30

Now, she did suggest, in regard to the sections on consumer awareness of costs of service prior to those services being conducted, that removing that now is probably a mistake because, in her opinion, the provincial government did not discuss this matter with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, who is responsible for the licensing and oversight of veterinarians in regard to the veterinary act. The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association already has requirements in place for veterinarians, and veterinarians such as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, that shares this room with us, have the responsibility to inform clients of the costs of services and to get agreement from the client prior to providing those services.

Therefore, in this veterinarian's opinion, there is no need for that legislation. She said to me that if there is an individual in the government that had a specific issue with a specific veterinarian, then they can lodge a formal complaint with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, who will investigate that issue and ensure that that veterinarian is dealt with appropriately, as per their existing requirements on that matter.

Now, this is the kind of stuff that I think we'd be hearing a lot of if we did determine to send this bill to committee. We've heard from a veterinarian that shares the room with us. I'm in the middle of telling you what a veterinarian said to me. I think every member on this side has probably received an e-mail from a veterinarian. Every situation, of course, has to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members who wish to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on . . .

Mr. Schneider: Madam Speaker?

Mr. Cooper: Oh. Mr. Speaker, sir, the great Speaker that you are.

It's still a pleasure to rise and speak under 29(2)(a). I was listening diligently to my hon. colleague from the incredible constituency of Little Bow. The lovely constituency of Little Bow, I think, is probably appropriate in this case. He was speaking about consulting with veterinarians and why that might be important.

I know that earlier today we heard from members of the government speaking in question period about how ministers had the opportunity to travel all across the province and speak to Albertans from all different areas of the province. The Minister of Seniors and Housing spoke very interestingly about hearing from seniors and how important that was to her ability to deliver on the important initiatives of the government. Mr. Speaker, that sort of makes me pause a little bit. Clearly, the minister felt that it was important to listen to Albertans when it came to issues of housing. The Member for Lethbridge-East asked a question about just how

glorious and magnificent the trip to Lethbridge was and the opportunity to hear from Albertans in southern Alberta.

I know that my colleague from Little Bow has received at least one contact from an Albertan that doesn't believe this government has done their job of listening with respect to veterinarians. I'm curious to know if the Member for Little Bow has had multiple folks contact him and just exactly what his opinion might be of the government coming to question period today and bragging about how good a job they're doing of listening to Albertans when, in fact, there are all sorts of piles of evidence that are coming into our offices that speak to the exact opposite of the government doing a good job of listening, that they're not consulting, certainly, with veterinarians in this case, that they're not listening to the important feedback about the good work that's being done by veterinarians in this province, and, in fact, lumping them in – I think we've heard the minister in this House talk about unscrupulous industry and service providers and then, in the next breath, talk about veterinarians. I know that veterinarians do a fantastic job because I hear that from constituents, and I also hear from veterinarians who are concerned about this very issue with respect to the government not listening.

I was so appreciative of the minister of seniors' comments when she spoke about listening to Albertans. I'm just curious to know if the Member for Little Bow thinks that this government ought to listen to all Albertans and not just the ones that they like to hear from.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Well, that's a tough one to follow there, Mr. Speaker, but I've got to say that it's a great question. I guess I would have to say that I agree one hundred per cent with the Minister of Seniors and Housing travelling around the province, trying to get some information so that she can make a decision in her ministry as to how she should proceed. I would say that that's exactly what we should be doing, and we should continue to be doing it.

We're talking about veterinarians at the moment, veterinarians that have had something slammed on top of them that they didn't exactly know was coming, I don't think, especially when the veterinary profession was asking the ministry to include them in all discussions, and that would have been with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. Certainly, I've received more than one letter. There are likely going to be several speeches on this matter as we continue forward.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of this referral amendment. Given that we're hearing from stakeholders, I think that the only recourse is to send this to committee so that we can get proper consultation, so that we can actually reach out to Albertans and hear their thoughts. I understand that the government spent a whole nine weeks to go out and consult, and they feel that that's appropriate. Sorry, I'm thinking about Bill 30. I'm confusing the bills. Well, they're all eight inches thick, it looks like.

But to get back to consulting, the actual answer here is that they didn't do nine weeks of consulting on this. From what I understand, what they did do was that they asked people to come in to consult, and then they told them what was in the bill. That sounds very clearly like the no-consultation bill called Bill 6, way back when we had farmers and ranchers across Alberta very upset with our current government. So you'd think that this government would

learn to allow for consultation, but it appears that when it comes to consultation, they always come up lacking.

Now, I do want to say that I am going through the press release that the minister brought forward, and again I'm quoting from the same press release as before, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses, the one where the minister pretty much had said that "bad actors" were all in this bill, more or less. I started to look to the people that she actually consulted and quoted inside of her press release because these are important. Now, the reason this is important is that these individuals that were clearly consulted on this bill got to see the bill and comment on the bill, but this press release was let out at exactly 4 o'clock on November 29. The bill was tabled for first reading at 3 o'clock on November 29. So they've had extensive time to get through Bill 31, this whole thing, in an hour, to be able to come up with an opinion for themselves and the industry that they represent. That seems to be a little loaded.

4:40

They're very excited about this bill. You know, like, we've got several examples of individuals that are showing that this is actually something that they feel will move their industry forward. I certainly would say that these appear to be, "We want your support for something even though you haven't seen it yet," that kind of support for this bill. That is not the same thing that I am getting from my constituents and the Member for Little Bow and the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster are getting from their constituents. So we've got some Albertans that have given endorsements to this that have had an hour to see the bill – and I think that is shameful – but we're getting actual people that are in the industries affected by this saying: we want more consultation. I don't think that's unfair. And that is why a referral motion is so important.

Certainly, the government put forward a survey in the summer to solicit opinions from Albertans. However, if you've read those questions, Mr. Speaker, you would see that they're incredibly slanted and leaning. That's not proper consultation. When you ask a loaded question, you expect a loaded answer. This government continues to talk about how they consulted with Albertans in order to put forth the best legislation they can. Well, it appears our veterinarians are very unhappy with this legislation. It doesn't appear that this is the best legislation they can put forward.

But you know what? Albertans continue to talk about how they're not actually consulted. They're told what will happen, and they're not listened to. This is just another example. What's the point of consultation if it's only one sided? "We put out an online survey. We put loaded questions in there, and then we get the answers we're looking for, and then that's our consultation." That's shameful. There is no point to it. It's simply something that sounds good for the government to say.

But when it comes to actually moving forward with legislation, we end up with Albertans frustrated with this government. My colleagues and I are speaking with the stakeholders, we're speaking with regular Albertans, and we're speaking with the veterinarians. They're all saying the same thing, that there's a lack of consultation. Furthermore, people and boards are absolutely blindsided when they finally get to see a copy of the legislation. That's not consultation; that's clear disrespect. That's clear disrespect, Mr. Speaker.

Take, for example, stakeholders in the automobile sale and repair industry. They came forward with a submission when Bill 203 was before the standing committee. As a result, the committee recommended that the bill not proceed. Imagine their surprise to find the legislation retabled less than two years later. I find it very interesting that the government has had an about-face on the topic,

and I wonder if they tossed out the input from stakeholders in its entirety or if they chose others who are just in line with the government's intent on these issues. It seems to me that it's quite disrespectful behaviour by this government.

There is so much more in this legislation that can be arbitrarily decided by the minister, and that is the true concern that stakeholders have. We actually do not know where the government is going because a lot of this is done in regulations. She is giving herself the power to more or less create something after this legislation has been completed. No consultation. The industry is not being able to show that they have been and will be an active participant when it comes to their industry. Who knows this industry best? It is the people that live and breathe and work and make taxable income. This is how we afford to move Albertans forward. And you know what? This government has failed.

There is so much more in this legislation, but I can tell you that when it comes to our stakeholders, I will reiterate, they just are concerned where this government is going because they just don't know what to expect. Industry, regardless of the type, deserves to have certainty so they can continue on in their businesses in a professional way that seeks to provide customers with best practices and services. If you keep changing the model, how will they be able to create an environment that is competitive like what the government wants in Alberta?

Or take, for example, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and veterinarians as a whole. They offered to work with the government. I believe that. AMVIC offered to work with the government. I believe that. The automobile repair industry would have offered to work with the government. We have all these people saying: let's work together to make this happen. But what we get in the end is a government that ceases to bring forward what we actually want to see, and that is a diversified economy in Alberta that is sustainable and is something that we can all be proud of.

Now, we'll move on to the fact that they've recently updated the bylaws and policies of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. They offered to strengthen them, and even though it was what the government wanted, this was ignored. They're willing to be a partner at the table. They approached it with the best intentions and willingness. They were ignored. Instead, the government has completely ignored the work they've done, the co-operation they've shown, and they've hurriedly pieced together some piece of legislation that makes no sense for the profession that operates well and sees a very, very small number of formal complaints each year.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

This government is rushing in, Madam Speaker, and we've seen this happen before. This government talks about partnerships and collaboration, but the truth is that they don't know how to approach the table in good faith. They inform Albertans and stakeholders what they're going to do after the fact that this bill was already in motion. It was already written. And sometimes after it's done, they're surprised with the result. You know what? When you don't do consultation right, you end up with an industry that is angry and a consumer that is not serviced. Alberta is holding its services to the highest standard. That's not good faith. That has nothing to do with inspiring confidence, and it sure doesn't build trust. It's a shame that this NDP government thinks that this is the way to do business, an absolute, complete shame.

Let's talk about AMVIC. AMVIC started acting on the recommendations from the George Cuff report, and they were fully accepted by the minister. They started making progress. They started correcting mistakes that should have been corrected a long time ago. Then, out of nowhere the minister and her government

step in and shake everything up yet again, creating more skepticism, mistrust when it started to be slowly rebuilt. That's not a way to run a board, a business, a government, or a province. Again, this is shameful, Madam Speaker, utterly shameful.

What about if we're going to look at ticket sales? We're trying to legislate things that are unenforceable like offshore ticket-buying bots. The intent for this at least is admirable, but it doesn't change the fact that it's unenforceable. Legislation should not be made for legislation's sake, nor should it be made to create a false sense of comfort or security.

4:50

Ontario has recently brought in similar legislation, and after it was introduced, CBC published an article from which I'd like to quote briefly. It reads in part:

Off-shore ticket bot operators are famous for being almost impossible to hunt down. The law sounds tough, but [it doesn't] prevent another debacle like the Hip's tour tickets if the responsible parties are seaward.

The goal of the legislation should not be to make symbolic statements that comfort people but do nothing or even worse, not address the problems at hand.

The goal of legislation should be to actively (and practically) protect people from force and fraud. In the case of ticket selling, that means keeping transactions transparent and safe. Not simply decreeing fairness and hoping everyone listens.

We need to have legislation that makes sense and is about problem solving, not problem seeking. Madam Speaker, this government just hasn't done its homework, and it needs to send this to committee to rectify the mistakes contained within it. This government has shown time and again that it rushes legislation through the House without fully considering the impact, without actually conducting proper consultation. This bill needs to go to committee in order to ensure that no time is wasted in getting it right the first time. It's better to get it done once the right way than have to come back and edit and fix it and amend it like we've had to do with other legislation this government has put forward.

If this is truly a bill about consumer protection, let's ensure that everyone has a seat at the table and this government is not blindly pushing forward on some ideological bent that is at the risk of honest, hard-working Albertans, who are doing their best and doing their jobs correctly. Please stop referring to Albertans as criminals, Minister.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to thank the member for such great work on this bill and for everything that you're bringing forward.

There were a couple of things that you were talking about with respect to respecting Albertans and their choices and how we move legislation like this forward. I mean, obviously, there are changes that need to be made, but when we're talking about groups of people that have been self-regulated up until this point and understanding what that means to them and how that impacts their businesses and who they are and how they work with the people that they service – you were mentioning something along the lines of how it makes Albertans feel when their ability to provide services that they've provided over this length of time is all of sudden coming under ministerial overreach. Could you please go on further to explain a little bit more about that?

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, you know, I hope that the members opposite are actually listening to what we're saying over here and what our stakeholders are saying. I hope that they're not being blinded by the side of the Chamber they sit on, and I hope that they're asking questions to this minister. I can't be the only one in this Chamber that has concerns with this. I do hear my colleagues having a lot of the same ones, but my colleagues across the aisle, the NDP colleagues, have to be hearing from their constituents as well, from veterinarians, from automobile salespeople. What is it that they're doing? Are they ignoring their constituents? I hope – I really hope – that they do ask this minister some questions.

This bill needs to be sent to a committee. There are some valid reasons. Albertans are reaching out to us because they are concerned, and they're very frustrated, Madam Speaker. I encourage all the members in the Assembly to support this amendment that my colleague has put forward. Let's look at every part of this bill, get it right before it goes too far and down the wrong path. Let's listen to our constituents because the constituents normally bring forward valid concerns. And you know what? A loaded online survey does not represent all of Alberta.

I understand that this government really feels that it's done its consultation because after Bill 6 I wouldn't want to go out and consult with Albertans either, but – you know what? – you're government. It is your responsibility, it is your due diligence to actually go out and talk with the people that you are governing right now. You don't just tell them the way this is and hope it works out because that rarely works.

I know that for myself I've got several e-mails from veterinarians within my e-mail. I do not have the same number as Vermilion-Lloydminster, but I will tell you that each and every one of the vets that have written to my constituency have valid concerns. They want to be heard. They need to be heard. You know what? Giving us about a week to get this legislation right is not giving those veterinarians the ability to be able to get the message to the government to make sure that this legislation gets it done right.

I still don't understand what this minister has against veterinarians. The fact that she is completely taking the governance away from a board that has worked tirelessly for Albertans – if I saw in the papers that we had problems across Alberta with veterinarians, then maybe this is a justifiable action that the minister is bringing forward, but I have not heard that. I will tell you that when I did google – and I know Google knows all. When I googled veterinarian problems, I couldn't find a whole lot of issues with this profession because – you know what? – these are good people. These people are highly respected in every rural community, and I can only assume that's in urban communities like Edmonton and Calgary. We trust these people with an animal that is close to us. I trust my dog Lexa to the local veterinarian. I know that when I bring my beautiful dog to that veterinarian, at that point it is the sole focus of that veterinarian to take care of it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure tonight to be able to speak to this referral motion to Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act. I would like to first of all say that this an issue of, you know, whether or not the government has been able to achieve fulsome consultation with stakeholders that would be affected by this bill, and I have to say that my concern is that I

am starting to see, from the letters and from the information I received and telephone calls, that in reality they have not.

My office has been inundated by calls from veterinarians in my riding. In fact, it makes me question whether or not the government was successful at being able to get to the southern part of Alberta and speak to the people and the veterinarians from my riding. I can tell you full well that the vets in my area do not feel that they have been consulted and that they would be very much in favour of me voting in favour of the referral motion to bring this to committee so that their voices can be heard.

Now, I am very interested to know whether the minister can table reports and table the support that she's received from vets specifically, who this is going to be affecting, so that we can take a look at this evidence that she says is so fulsome. I also have to ask the question, you know, in terms of saying: well, this needs to be done. What was the real, burning need? My question is: did the vets complain? Did they complain about their own self-regulation?

5:00

Really, we're talking about three groups here. We're talking about veterinarians, animals, and their owners. Now, I'm pretty sure that the animals didn't complain, and from what we understand, the vets didn't complain about being self-regulated. In fact, it's interesting to note that one of the other members from Vermilion-Lloydminster earlier tabled an article saying that vets are the third most respected profession in the professions. It begs the question of whether or not the clients would be complaining or saying that there's such a need for this regulation.

Now, I also want to point out, Madam Speaker, that in that same article it said that politicians were at the bottom of the list of those people respected. Based upon that information, the fact that we have this government wanting to regulate the third most respected profession that we have, I am scared to think about the regulation that they're going to be bringing forward for politicians, to regulate politicians, being the lowest and most disrespected of all professions. It's interesting that they're planning on, based upon their logic, regulating their own selves.

Now, the Minister of Service Alberta said that she knew of people who wouldn't take their pets in because they were paralyzed with fear – I believe those are the words that she used – of the cost. Now, as a pet owner who does live on a farm, I can tell you that pets are part of the family. I don't believe that there's anybody in here that, when your pet needs the help and the support, would be paralyzed because of the cost. This is like saying that you wouldn't take your children in to get the support that they need. I can't imagine anybody would do that to their children or to their pets. It didn't make sense when she said it, and I'm not sure whether or not she thought about that comment.

Now, we talk about the process of consultation that they went through. They said that there were two in-person meetings with vet associations, and this almost seemed like this was the main reason why this should go forward, because there were two consultations. Well, I would, first of all, be very interested in knowing what these associations said. What best practices did they say needed to be presented in this bill? Did these two veterinary associations say that we actually even need a bill? That information should be presented to the House so that we can take a look at it because if these associations really, again, felt such a burning need to have their own self-regulated organization become a regulated organization, then we'd like to be able to see that evidence. I would like to be able to see that evidence.

Now, it was stated that, you know, in the bill it specifically – and I'm going to use this as context, Madam Speaker, so that I can help you and my fellow members understand the reasons why I believe

that this needs to be referred to committee. On page 23, in part 5.1, it says:

- 48.1(1) A registered veterinarian shall, in accordance with regulations,
 (a) disclose to a client . . . all fees for the prescribed type of veterinary medicine services proposed for the client's animal.

Now, I've taken my pets to a vet. I don't know. Maybe in small communities it's different than in larger communities, but I can tell you my experience. My experience was that when I took them in, first of all, it was a very caring environment. I didn't know the vet at the time, but I thought: here is someone who is professional; this person actually cares about who I considered a family member, my pet. And I thought: I feel safe bringing them to their care.

The first thing that I received from this vet was a description of what the problem was and what it would cost to fix it. In fact, I wasn't just given, you know, what the problem was and how to fix it, but I was actually given options. I had options about how I could do certain procedures which would cost a little bit more, but this would be the outcome. It was actually really nice that this vet was so willing to provide that kind of care to myself.

Now, I can tell you that there are other professions where I don't feel the same kind of care, I don't get the same kind of care when I go in and I speak to different organizations and professions. Again, the reason why I say this, Madam Speaker, is because I'm trying to understand how the minister could say that there was such a burning need for regulation on an association of vets.

The other point that I think is substantial in this is on regulations, section 48.3(1). It says: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council, after consultation with the Council" – now, it's good to hear that it's after consultation with the council – "may make regulations respecting fees and authorization for veterinary medicine, including, without limitation, regulations." Then it goes from (a) through (h) on different ways that they can be able to regulate this industry.

Now, I have to ask: why is it such a big appetite of this government to micromanage every single aspect of our society? Again, in context, the question here is: was there actually a reason, a burning reason, to be able to regulate this? Was there a public outcry that said: we need to regulate vets because they are doing X, Y, and Z. I haven't heard any reasons other than the minister, again, saying that she had heard of people who were paralyzed with fear of the cost of going in and having probably what they would consider a family member treated. Why do we need to take an organization that is self-regulated – and obviously the self-regulation seems to be working because they are the third most respected of all professions in Alberta – and put them under one of the least respected of professions, which is politicians? How does that make sense? Third most to the lowest, and this makes sense.

An Hon. Member: Just certain politicians.

Mr. Hunter: Just certain politicians, I absolutely agree. One of the members opposite said that, and I couldn't agree more.

Now, the interesting thing is that this cabinet is allowed to prescribe types of veterinary medicine services. They are allowed to describe respecting the disclosure to a client of fees on prescribed types of veterinary medicine services, respecting the advertisement. I mean, we're not talking about just saying: we're going to inject into what we consider is the problem, which might be the fees. We're saying: we're going to tell you how you can advertise; we can tell you what kind of suite of products you're going to be allowed to provide. This is all of a sudden becoming a big problem for veterinarians. Again, I have to say that if there was no problem, why would they inject themselves into this? Why would they inject

themselves into an industry that was the third highest of all professions, the third most respected profession? I don't understand why they would inject themselves into this situation, other than that they must have a monumental appetite for micromanaging every aspect of society.

5:10

Maybe what needs to be done here is that we need to be able to tell everybody by talking about this that if you are a self-regulating body, you have a big target on your back with this government, that from now on don't tell everybody that you're a self-regulating body in Alberta because heaven forbid that you actually are successful at that and that you actually have an industry that is very good at what they do and that the client support is very high and that everybody thinks you're a great organization, because you're going to get regulated by this government. Again, going from an organization that is the third most respected to being regulated by the profession that is the least respected: it makes absolutely no sense.

Now, obviously, a concern here is that we've got five pages in this bill that talk about how they would like to change this veterinary practice in Alberta. Here's the problem. The problem is that the cabinet has the right to be able to write regulations, and the devil is always in the details, Madam Speaker. What kind of regulations are they going to be bringing forward? Do we have an opportunity to be able to know what the government's thoughts are on how they need to regulate this? And if these are regulations, then we need to make sure that those regulations are something that the veterinarians would want.

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

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 30 **An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being** **of Working Albertans**

Mr. Gotfried moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment December 5: Connolly]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me time to add my voice to the debate around my colleague's amendment that would refer Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, to committee. Part of the strength of this Legislature is that we not only have the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of many members but that that diversity allows us to collaborate to make sure legislation is as good as it gets before it's passed. Included in that process is the ability to send a piece of legislation back for additional information because I'm sure we all know it would be better not to pass something than to pass a flawed bill.

Madam Speaker, this bill is one such that needs to be sent to committee for a more fulsome look and a more substantive consultation. This is a large and complex bill that deserves to be treated slowly and methodically. We have seen this government

push through large, complex bills before, and it is a disservice to Albertans everywhere to do that.

There are some good pieces in this legislation, and that is part of what makes it so frustrating. Had this bill been pared down into several pieces, we might not be having this conversation now. Instead, the government is forcing us to deal with the entirety of it, and that's one reason we need to push this to the committee before proceeding.

Take, for example, the fact that we could be putting small and medium-sized businesses at stake because the administrative charges associated with enacting this bill are too cumbersome and costly for them to absorb. We saw another 12,000 full-time jobs lost by Albertans last month, and we don't need to add to that number or create more uncertainty around the job market that exists currently.

What I and my colleagues would like to see and hear from the government is evidence that the changes proposed in this bill will actually be helpful. The government members like to talk about the evidence all the time when it's convenient for them. Well, we're asking them to provide some hard-and-fast evidence that this legislation will be helpful in moving things forward. You heard me talk about concerns with the employment market and workforce. Again, we'd like to see some facts associated with whether or not this is truly in the best interest of working Albertans at this time.

I'll be frank with you, Madam Speaker. If the government had done its job, we wouldn't need this referral motion. If the government was not so keen on pushing through a huge bill shortly before we're supposed to rise for Christmas, we wouldn't need this referral. If the government had run comprehensive consultation, we wouldn't need to talk about the need to refer this bill to committee.

Now, the government will of course say that they have done a lot of consultation in regard to this bill, but one can hardly count a public opinion survey with heavily slanted and leading questions as consultation. That is much more a case of the government knowing which answers they want to hear and doing what they could to ensure they received those answers.

Another example is that this bill goes even farther than what is suggested by the WCB Review Panel's recommendation. Yet again we see government doing a semblance of consultation but actually just using it to cover for the fact that they are going to do whatever they want to regardless of the input they receive.

You see, Madam Speaker, the evidence is clear that it is best for government and Albertans that this bill be sent to committee for further research, consultation, and discussion. This is the one reason why legislative committees exist, to provide an outlet for all members here to ensure that due diligence is practised by the government. We need to ensure that due diligence is practised now.

You know, Madam Speaker, I've never been one for filibustering. When I was in government, I used to be frustrated sitting over there, listening to the opposition filibuster. Now that I am in opposition, earlier this fall I had to sit here and listen to the government filibuster their own bills. It's just frustrating. I mean, we adjourned early. We adjourned at 4 o'clock, and the government was filibustering some simple, minor bills that we all agreed on and supported. I wish they'd have brought them at the end and brought these complicated ones first, when we had time to consult. Like, yesterday we got a bill dropped like this, still hot, a book, and you want us to pass it tomorrow.

We were able to filibuster this bill to the weekend, which I was glad of because when I went home to my constituency on the weekend, I met with the chamber of commerce. What they had to say was nothing like what the minister was saying. Yeah, they consulted with them. They told them what they were going to do, and the chamber didn't support it and told them that. The

consultation doesn't mean that you tell them what you're going to do and just do what you want; you should actually listen to the people. The chamber of commerce represents the businesspeople and the small business of this province, which drives it, and the chamber of commerce is not supportive of this bill, believe me. I talked to mine on the weekend and to lots of businesspeople that are not supportive of this.

I have no choice but to support referring this bill to committee so we can have a better conversation with the real people of Alberta. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak under 29(2)(a) with respect to just some of the comments from my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti. You know, the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has been a member of this Assembly for quite an extended period of time, and he is a very well-respected legislator on both sides of the Chamber, certainly on this side and, I'd expect, on that as well.

5:20

I know that the Minister of Education, the Premier, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade would have had the opportunity to work with the member when he was, in fact, some of those same ministers on the other side of the House. You know, I think they quite likely would tell you – and I know, Madam Speaker, because I happened to work in the precincts here supporting members at that time and had the opportunity to work with the minister of the day. I'm sure that the Minister of Education and others would tell you about the good work that he did and how open and accessible he was. I know as a member of the opposition that we quite appreciated the transfer of information and his general knowledge about what was happening around the precincts.

I think it's so interesting to hear him now speak about some of his frustrations, when it comes to the legislative process and how we see this government operating, as a member who's had lots of experience with preparing legislation to ensure that we can allow for the appropriate amount of debate possible with respect to the sessional calendar.

As he highlighted, the very fact that at the start of this session and, certainly, at the start of the spring session we saw the government speaking at length about their own legislation, that they had introduced in the Chamber, while seemingly they scrambled to get other pieces of legislation introduced – a good example of that is what we saw yesterday with Bill 32. It's important, Madam Speaker, because it's exactly why we should be sending pieces like Bill 30 to committee, to ensure that we have the appropriate time to study it. If we look at Bill 32, this is what a bill that's been rushed through the printers and sent to the Chamber looks like. As you can see, it's on this paper, eight and a half by 11, stapled together at the back of the Assembly somewhere and did not actually come from the Queen's Printer, who has the opportunity to have it bound appropriately. I'll just show you exactly what it should look like. If the government wasn't rushing legislation into the Chamber, they would have had it already bound like we have come to know and expect legislation to be.

But what we've seen this session is the government rushing legislation in the dying days leading up to Christmas, intending to run the opposition morning, noon, and night, and rush legislation through the Chamber. That's exactly what we've seen with Bill 32.

It's what we're seeing with Bill 30. Listen, there are a number of different sections of this legislation that we agree with, that are a very positive step in the right direction. What we don't want is to have to come back in the spring to fix the errors of this government. We know that it's happened regularly.

I'm just curious to know if the member would like to provide any additional commentary on the significant challenge that's before the Assembly with respect to not being as respectful of the Chamber and respectful of the process as perhaps would be beneficial for all Albertans so that we can get the best piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I referred to it, you know, it was Bill 32, but we were speaking to Bill 30. I'm embarrassed that I have to get up and filibuster because I've never done it in almost 10 years. I'm doing it now because there are some big pieces of legislation. There's one left to be supposedly introduced yet. It looks like, I think, Bill 34 is yet to be introduced. We were actually supposed to rise on Thursday. Are they going to introduce the bill the day we rise?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. McIver: He hasn't spoken to it already?

The Acting Speaker: I'm just double-checking. One minute.

Hon. member, you've already spoken to second reading, and you've also spoken to the referral, so unfortunately you can't speak.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my real privilege to be able to speak, particularly when you're in the chair, and I wish to discuss referring Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, to a legislative standing committee. I really like this referral motion brought up by my colleague. There are so many valid reasons to do that. Both my benchmarks here, sitting on my left and right, spoke very eloquently of this need to refer this bill because this bill makes sweeping changes to the Workers' Compensation Board system.

That's why it's really important to refer bills like this, because the government has a pattern here. At the end of every legislative session suddenly, you know, they wake up and bring thousands of pages of bills which are really important for Albertans, and then we, being the Official Opposition, are expected to respond to those last-minute, important bills, voluminous bills. With that, actually, the quality of the debate in the House will suffer because of lack of time. It's not a laughing matter. It impacts every Albertan and their livelihoods.

Madam Speaker, I find that the work in committees is incredibly important in order to shape the future policy direction of the province. I like committees so much that I keep asking my party's leadership to add me to more committees.

Some Hon. Members: That's true.

Mr. Panda: But I don't get any more pay. Let me be clear. I'm not getting any more pay by asking to be included in more committees. [interjection] Yeah, but I get the opportunity to learn about what's happening out there and also the rest of the province. That's the reason I want to be involved in standing committees.

The legislative standing committees are the best venues for conducting public consultations on any legislation, yet the NDP

government fails to see the value in this exercise, Madam Speaker. If the government missed public consultation in creating a law, the legislative standing committees are the last line of defence. These committees sometimes do a real good job. We have seen with the time change legislation, brought forward by one of our young friends from Edmonton, that there was a lot of interest throughout the province. It generated lots of engagement across the province, and the subcommittee went around the province and gathered information. Finally, in consultation with Albertans we made the right decision. Similarly, we should be trying to refer this bill, as suggested by my hon. colleague here, to the standing committee so we can debate it thoroughly.

You know, if we had been sending more bills to the committees, we could have avoided many legislation amendments down the road, because that's our job. We are here to make the bills better, the government's bills better. That's what the previous speaker also mentioned, that, you know, we should be doing real consultations, not, like, telling Albertans: "Oh, okay. This is how I want to do it. You just rubber-stamp what we are saying." That's not the job of the Official Opposition. That's not what we're sent here for.

5:30

Now, Madam Speaker, as Forrest Gump used to say, "Stupid is as stupid does." As much as we want to legislate stupid away, stupid is as stupid does, and accidents will happen on work sites when workers are not paying attention or are not careful and not thinking things through. This Bill 30: the core principle of this bill is that all work-site parties have a responsibility for the health and safety of all workers. I completely agree with that. However, Bill 30 puts significantly more responsibility on employers.

As you may know, Madam Speaker, I worked in the oil sands industry for a long time and also in the oil and gas industry for a long time. We all know that workers already have a right to refuse dangerous work. If the work is deemed to be dangerous, then they have the right to refuse. We all have a responsibility to ensure that stupid things don't create a Swiss cheese scenario, where the holes will line up, allowing bad things to happen on the job site.

Bill 30 includes a number of provisions that are absent in the current Occupational Health and Safety Act, the OHS Act, either in part or in whole. Just like this government rammed through changes to the Labour Relations Code and the Employment Standards Code all at once, they're doing it again by changing the Workers' Compensation Act and the OHS Act at the same time.

This large, complex bill could easily be split into separate pieces of more manageable legislation. I'm not the first one to suggest this, Madam Speaker. Previous speakers also talked about the merits of splitting this bill into biteable pieces of manageable legislation. This is where sending the bill to the committee would come in handy. Small and medium-sized businesses are especially at risk because they're not as able to absorb increased administrative costs to support the joint committees, added administrative training, and alternate work placements.

There are administrative tasks like mandatory joint work-site health and safety committees. Previously they were only mandated at the discretion of the minister. The money spent on supporting the new administrative costs can actually take away from a small or medium-sized business's ability to invest in new safety measures and equipment.

Madam Speaker, now, I suspect that the NDP are trying to legislate a cultural change into the workplace. The NDP are trying to be noble here, but then they're trying to rush this legislation. Cultural changes happen from the leadership in charge. One cannot wave a magic wand and expect things to be fixed. As we speak, the

people, Albertans, are wising up, and they're able to see through, and the opposition to Bill 30 is growing every day.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce came out swinging against Bill 30, Madam Speaker. Wouldn't you like to hear their arguments in detail? If you do want to hear their arguments, then send it to the committee. I would love to see Mr. Kobly from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce provide his argument against Bill 30 in contrast to Mr. McGowan and the Alberta Federation of Labour's supporting Bill 30. You should entertain their counterviews. You know, if you just take the input from Mr. McGowan and ignore other valuable input, it's not helpful to Albertans.

The NDP government has claimed to have conducted consultations on Bill 30 before it was tabled. However, the stakeholders found that the questions on the consultations were leading and are a sign the government was looking to confirm and gain approval for their own ideas rather than actually listening to stakeholders and the public with an open mind. The previous speaker, the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, mentioned that on the weekend he went and talked to the stakeholders in Grande Prairie, and that's what they told him, that they were not adequately consulted and that consultations were just leading in a particular direction rather than hearing out the real concerns of the stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, this is a déjà vu of Bill 17. FOIPed documents showed that the government's consultation on workplace laws last spring had a predetermined outcome, so there is a pattern there. The NDP has learned well from the progressives to make that square peg fit that round hole and use those boilerplate and leading questions to confirm the bias you want and lead people down the garden path to their answer. You just wanted to hear what you want to hear, but you're not seeking the input.

We see that the court's ability to use creative sentencing options for employers found in contravention of the act is now contained in Bill 30. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View talked about . . .

Mr. Cooper: A good member.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. She talked about the creative sentencing options, and I can use some examples, Madam Speaker. If the owner of a KFC sells a bad batch of chicken, the judge could conceivably make the owner dress up in a chicken suit and have him hold a sign shaming him. It potentially could happen. I think this is where the NDP is taking us. [interjection] I'm not in that suit, but it could be so creative because you're giving that option in this bill. I think this is where the NDP is taking us with this bill, and this is why we need to go to the committee.

Madam Speaker, I have done what I can here to demonstrate the concerns with Bill 30. I have only barely scratched the surface. There are even more important things going on in here with Bill 30 that are reason enough to send this bill to committee for study and consultation. We have the time before the next election for a study and consultation unless the Premier and the cabinet are planning to prorogue or call an early election. I don't see why there is a rush for this. We can still refer it to the committee.

5:40

By not sending this bill to the committee, the NDP are signalling to the province that something is up. We don't know what that something is. People are just speculating. They are planning something: maybe a cabinet shuffle, maybe an early election, maybe a prorogation and new throne speech. We don't know what it is. We don't know why they are rushing this bill. Or are the NDP just selfish and want to avoid any real work in the month of January because that will mess up all our holiday plans, vacation plans?

I just came back from the Westminster seminar.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've got a few comments for my colleague for Calgary-Foothills. A lot of the talk around why they want refer it to committee: a few large areas, I guess. Consultation. As we've explained, you know, we received 1,300 surveys, 90 written submissions, eight in-person round-table discussions, and the government consulted with a number of Albertans, including employers, workers, and trades groups. Also, a big part of that was the WCB independent panel in which they completed a review, and they themselves received 1,700 questionnaires and 200 written submissions, and 60 responses were submitted. What they determined as well is that what we are putting in place here is sustainable and affordable.

You know, I think what's being missed here – I don't want to delay this legislation by sending it to committee. Part of the reason is that I've seen, I guess, the behaviour of the opposition in committee, and I don't think it would get us anywhere. That's one reason. The other reason is that, I mean, if you don't want to take this consultation seriously, then how's 40 years? Forty years is a pretty long consultation, 40 years ignored.

Mr. McIver: Forty years of success.

Mr. Coolahan: Okay. Yes. Forty years. Forty years.

I guess my greatest concern is that the opposition is always harping on consultation, and of course we take consultation seriously. We take it seriously; however, consultation should not supersede workplace safety. That is the key. So that's why we need to move on and discuss this through second reading and third reading right here in the House. That's what we're doing. That's exactly what we're doing.

Another of the issues that the opposition has and why they want to refer this to the committee has to do with the fact that this is a large bill. That's fine. It is a large bill, but it's a large bill because we've combined OH and S and WCB, which are intrinsically connected, and it's quite logical to do so. Again, the other reason is that we're playing catch-up after 40 years, so there's a lot to fill in that other provinces already have.

You know, I don't think we should be referring this to committee just simply because the opposition can't manage their budget and they don't have enough staff to get through the bill successfully in enough time to put forth reasonable arguments, reasonable amendments. That's not my problem. That's not Albertans' problem. Albertans' problem is workplace safety. That's their issue. They have said that they do like some of this, but they want to refer it for other pieces. I wasn't quite clear on what those pieces were, actually, but . . .

An Hon. Member: The bad ones.

Mr. Coolahan: What are the bad ones? I'm not sure.

Why I think we need to move forward on this bill and not refer it at this time is the joint work-site health and safety committee. [interjection] Yeah. I think this is a fantastic idea. Most other provinces have this in place. They're very successful.

You know, I was actually pretty disappointed with what the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka said earlier today on this. It was a very cynical view of a joint health and safety committee. He said something to the effect, you know, that it would create more

conflict at work. I don't believe that at all. Did the member actually read what is done in a joint health and safety committee?

- (a) the receipt, consideration and disposition of concerns and complaints respecting the health and safety of workers.

An Hon. Member: Sounds scary.

Mr. Coolahan: Frightening.

- (e) the development and promotion of programs for education and information concerning health and safety.

Why should we delay this?

- (b) participation in the identification of hazards to workers . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members that wish to speak to the referral?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:46 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Orr
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Panda
Cooper	McIver	Stier

Against the motion:

Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Connolly	Jansen	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dang	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Loyola	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Sigurdson
Goehring	Miller	Sucha
Gray		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The House will now stand adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:03 p.m.]

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