



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 3, 2018

Day 24

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

### Fourth Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)  
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)  
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Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),  
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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Gottfried, 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)  
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Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)  
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Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)  
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin  
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
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### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 3, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning, everyone.

Let each of us in prayer or in contemplation remember and have a moment of silence in remembrance of the 10 deaths of Canadians on the streets of Toronto and of a fellow parliamentarian who died at work as a Member of Parliament yesterday. One moment of silence.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Address to the Legislative Assembly by Governor General

21. Mr. Feehan moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the Assembly invite Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, CC, CMM, COM, CQ, CD, Governor General of Canada, to the floor of this Chamber to address the Legislative Assembly on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 15, 2018, and that this address be the first order of business at 1:30 p.m., following which the ordinary business of the Assembly will resume notwithstanding the designated times stipulated in Standing Order 7, and be it further resolved that Her Excellency's address become part of the permanent record of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any comments with respect to the motion?

[Government Motion 21 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

##### Bill 9

##### Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

[Debate adjourned April 10]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I rise to speak to this issue, I do it with some trepidation. The issue of abortion is very sensitive, and I want to respect the sensitivity of the issue. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank members of this Assembly who have been courageous in their advocacy on this. I also want to acknowledge that this is an issue that is very divisive. It has divided us as a country. It has tragic consequences for doctors and others involved in the provision of abortion services and has resulted in jail sentences for those who have had strong beliefs that abortion is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the strong beliefs against abortion services. I've had friends of mine choose to go to jail as they defied existing bubble laws in B.C. I respect beliefs based on faith convictions. I personally would call myself someone whose faith influences my beliefs and world view. I acknowledge that it is my Christian faith that gives me such strong convictions for things such

as minimum wage, safe working conditions, social supports, public education accessible to all, and the strong commitment to creation care.

I also have experienced how faith influences health care decisions such as for those not wishing to have blood products, how one dies, or the shunning of lepers in the Buddhist society I lived in. I may not have the same beliefs as Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Wiccans, or agnostics, but I respect and understand how belief in religion and spiritual teachings will influence how one will be convicted of social and community issues.

Mr. Speaker, I have lived in places where access to abortion was difficult, where women died because they were unable to prevent pregnancies, where women self-medicated to cause abortions. I also saw the difference when women did have access to contraception, to legal abortions, and when developing countries, with supports from the U.S. and Canada and other developed countries, supported programs to limit pregnancies. This has convinced me that those measures were life affirming.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply saddened that the government had to put forth this bill in order to protect women accessing a legal medical service in Alberta. I am saddened that the women who have made a choice, which is their right, are hassled on their way to having a legal medical procedure. I am saddened that these women, who may have had difficult conversations with a partner, with family, and with themselves, are subjected to intimidation and harassment.

I am saddened that employees of the clinics are in fear for their safety and that of their families. The health practitioners are supporting women in a legal medical procedure, and they should be treated as such. I believe that everyone should have the right to have faith-nurtured beliefs, but I do not agree that intimidation, harassment, the taking of pictures, and threats to safety are a right.

Mr. Speaker, I have been known to engage in demonstrations in showing my disagreement with government policies. For example, I was horrified at the federal government that the Leader of the Opposition was part of. He was actually the minister responsible who stopped the funding of health benefits for refugee claimants in Canada. I was glad to be part of faith groups who demonstrated and worked hard to have this mean-spirited measure reversed. But I know that if I had threatened anyone within the Conservative caucus, I would have been arrested.

The same thing would have happened if I had harassed the present Leader of the Opposition as a cabinet minister for his government's treatment of prisoners, for removing training programs, closing prison farms and prison workshops, and increasing minimum sentences. The same government instituted more challenging citizenship requirements, wanted to ban burkas and niqabs. I could go on and on about these life-threatening policies previously passed by the government of the Leader of the Opposition. I personally cannot reconcile how someone who states he is antiabortion has supported policies that threaten the well-being and life of so many.

But, Mr. Speaker, this brings me to a discussion of what it means to be pro life. I understand that many in the UCP would claim to be pro life. The opposition leader, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, definitely claims to be pro life. Pro life is a code word that has different meanings. I am not Catholic, so while I'm familiar with the understanding of life within that context, that results in prohibition against birth control, I could not be able to theologically defend such a position. I wanted to speak about a faith tradition that I'm more familiar with and why it pains me so much to think of the members opposite voting against this bill or abstaining. I also want to address those with deep antiabortion convictions and urge them to explore a more completely pro-life outlook.

What does it mean to be pro life? Many people say that the only faithful expression of evangelical faith is to be pro life, but when pro life is used to refer only to life prior to birth, meaning a stance on the subject of abortion, then it is really just a small slice of a much broader faithful, evangelical expression. Being pro life ties into the Biblical concept that all are created in the image of God. There are times and places, and even the number of hairs on our head are known because God the Creator created such persons in their own image. However, being pro life and having that include only the value of life prebirth is the political, read UCP, expression of an evangelical value. It is the politicization of a theological issue.

Having a consistent life ethic means caring about fighting for the protection of human life in all of its forms. For those who call themselves pro life and have come to that conclusion from a Christian conviction, it most often means valuing life prebirth. However, being pro life should naturally extend to life after birth as well, so a faithful interpretation of what it means to be pro life as a Christian would be to care about the wages of the working poor, to fight the death penalty, and to be concerned about gun violence. A consistent life ethic would be pro immigrant and would likely lead people to oppose war and violence and especially the dehumanization of foreigners. A completely pro-life stance would care about both the opiate crisis and the life-saving needle exchange and opiate treatment centre and the effect climate change has on both God's planet and God's people.

If members opposite are using faith to vote no or to abstain against this bill, then I'm saddened that our common faith roots do not allow them to see that affirming life should have caused them to support environmental stewardship, increased support for affordable housing, support for safe injection sites, support for increased funding in social services, access to contraception, more funding for end-of-life services and, especially, antiracism and refugee programs. The federal Conservative Party and the UCP have used pro life to slice off a single issue. They have taken a portion of theological teaching and turned it into a tool for politics.

9:10

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members of the Assembly to vote for this bill, to vote to ensure a hassle- and intimidation-free medical procedure that is legal. I would urge the members opposite to consider what a consistent pro-life ethic would mean. It definitely does not mean harassing women seeking a legal medical service, denying climate change, not supporting refugees, and they definitely would not deny increased funding for long-term care. It means creating a society where all lives can thrive, where care for the vulnerable, including the addicted, is there, where we invest in our community and share our wealth with each other through taxation.

Mr. Speaker, I think part of the challenge is that sometimes we only look at things from a very, very small perspective. For me, anybody who would oppose this bill, that is meant to support women going through some very difficult times and taking the step that they feel is right for them – hassling them just does not really support any consistent pro-life ethic. I would really urge members opposite and anyone who does not believe that this bill is necessary to consider what it means to be consistently pro life. I would urge you to especially look at climate change and creation care and how you're going to be supporting this in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 15 Appropriation Act, 2018

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, everyone. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I along with members of this government am proud to implement Budget 2018, which is built on three pillars. The first is diversifying the economy by fighting for market access, adding value to our energy products here at home, and supporting new and developing industries. The second is protecting vital public services by making sure loved ones get the care they need, young people get the best education possible, and no one is left behind. The third pillar, Madam Speaker, is returning to balance by investing public dollars where they're needed most, eliminating Conservative waste, and controlling spending to return to balanced budgets by 2023-24.

During the course of this debate we heard concerns about Alberta's debt levels and deficit. That's why, along with the path to balance, we remain focused on finding efficiencies and savings as well. Madam Speaker, through Budget 2018 our government is ensuring public dollars are spent where they are needed most and eliminating waste. Even with the debt that will be accumulated as we reach balanced budgets, Alberta is still expected to maintain the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in Canada by a considerable margin. I'll just say that one more time. Even with the debt that will be accumulated as we reach balanced budgets, Alberta is still expected to maintain the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in Canada by a considerable margin.

Our pledge is to return to balanced budgets but doing so in a manner that continues to support Albertans by continuing to invest in health care, education, and social supports because if our recovery were based on hollowing out public services, neglecting our infrastructure like hospitals, schools, roads, and other government buildings, and leaving vulnerable Albertans behind through deep cuts to important income supports, as was done by the Conservatives in the recent past, it would in fact not be a recovery at all.

I ask all members of this House to support this bill so that we can get on with the important task of implementing Budget 2018: A Recovery Built to Last.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today and am pleased to speak to Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018, for the budget. A recovery built to last indeed. In rising today, I rise to voice my concern for this budget and for the current and future state of our great province under the leadership of the NDP and in their decided collaboration with their close ally and fellow fiscal hawk Justin Trudeau. As we heard last night, the minister renewed his connection to the winning ways of Ontario, as was apparently quoted in his greetings from that province.

There are a few highlights to ponder in this budget which are concerning not only in this budget but actually in the effects, maybe

not the intent but the effects, the unintended consequences of some of the actions of this government, Madam Speaker: zero full-time jobs created in March; 156,500 unemployed Albertans; 44,000 unemployed youth; the loss of 2,400 full-time youth jobs also for the month of March; a shrinking labour force; 92,000 fewer payroll jobs at the end of 2017. Ninety-two thousand fewer payroll jobs: each of those is attached to a struggling Alberta family who is trying to make ends meet, struggling to keep a roof over their heads, struggling to put food on the table.

We're hearing of increased incidents and need at the food banks. I just spent several hours this past Sunday making 174 birthday bags for needy Albertans so that children don't have to go without having a birthday party and can receive one simple gift that might be the bright spot in an otherwise challenged life where one or both of their parents may have lost their jobs.

Out of work for a year or more. That doubled from 7.8 to 15.6 per cent. That doubled last year, Madam Speaker, a doubling of people out of work for a year or more. What I'm hearing in my constituency is that people have been hanging on. They've been hanging on to that hope, but as they say, hope is not a strategy. In keeping that roof over their heads, they've been accessing assistance from family and friends. They've been dipping into their retirement incomes, many of them, trying to keep themselves afloat. As I heard from the ATB's chief economist, he has an expectation during this year of more bankruptcies and foreclosures amongst Albertans. That frightens me.

Our largest city has the third-highest unemployment among major Canadian cities, and our second-largest city, the city of Edmonton, has the sixth highest. That's not the Alberta that I know and love. We led this country in wealth creation, led this country in entrepreneurial spirit. We led this country in wealth creation, that we shared generously with the rest of this country. More lower-paying jobs: also from many of our noted economists. As much of a struggle as ever, as we heard from the Edmonton Chamber.

Madam Speaker, 73 per cent of businesses are worried about rising costs due to an all economic pain, no environmental gain carbon tax. There are 60,000 fewer jobs across Canada due to misguided minimum wage increases, with the worst-hit demographic among those already experiencing some of the highest unemployment rates: the youth of this province, the future of this province, the young people with the entrepreneurial spirit, with the drive, with the ambition to build a great life for themselves.

But that's just the beginning, Madam Speaker. What do the headlines say? Alberta's taxes drive away investors. By my last count – this is an account from over a year ago – \$34.8 billion of foreign direct investment has left this province. I suspect that if we looked at pension funds and other factors of investment, it would be more than double that amount.

9:20

We're hearing death by a thousand cuts from small businesses, we're seeing homeless shelters at or above capacity, and a lot of people have run out of their EI. Again, back to my point earlier, when you have people that have been unemployed for long periods of time, a year or two years, they've run out of benefits, they've eaten into their retirement savings, they've taken equity out of their homes, they've run up their credit cards. This is what frightens me, Madam Speaker, about the state of this province under this government.

Charitable giving in Alberta has declined. I just talked with a close colleague of mine yesterday, and he said that the charity that he works with is down in their fundraising 11 per cent but that their costs due to the carbon tax and minimum wage and other things have gone up more than 10 per cent. So they now have a 20 per cent

gap in delivering those services to the families and needy and struggling that they serve.

Where is that gap going to be made up when we have an economy that is not firing on all cylinders? People are trying to be generous, they're trying to move ahead, they're trying to ensure that they can make ends meet and that they can support the communities in which they live, but it's becoming a struggle. As I noted yesterday, we have recreation centres and arenas and swimming pools and churches and nonprofit groups that are having a sincere challenge with that.

What are families saying? The carbon tax will cost us \$667 this year and up to \$1,111 when this government, in co-operation with their close ally Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, increases it a further 67 per cent. Again, I mentioned that recreation centres, arenas, pools, churches, nonprofits are really getting hit hard. That's from them, from those entities themselves.

The NDP have come up with better policies to crush not only small farms but all small businesses. That's what we're hearing, Madam Speaker. Seventy per cent of Albertans feel their economic situation is stagnant or getting worse. This budget is going to contribute further to that by following this misguided ideology.

Madam Speaker, 92 per cent of business owners are not confident the Alberta government is committed to improving the business climate. So in spite of up, up, up and all the new job creation, I think the bucket has too many holes in it. The Finance minister has a big drill. He's drilled too many holes in this bucket, and some of his other ministers trying to fill it to the top just cannot keep up with the holes that this government is drilling into the Alberta economy and into our finances. That bucket is draining faster than we can fill it.

Forty-two per cent of Albertans find it difficult to cover monthly expenses, and we're hearing comments that this government is coming off as tone deaf and spinning a story that is not true. And Albertans know it.

Our own recently retired Auditor General said of the climate leadership plan: "It is difficult to get a full picture of the . . . costs and benefits." I think that relates to our comment, which is: all economic pain and no environmental gain. It lacks an overall implementation plan. We've heard of certain things from unicorns that may relate to this. There is no implementation plan. Hope is not a strategy. We also heard that it does not clearly state the expected and actual costs.

Free light bulbs. I got a call two days ago from an old business colleague. He pulled up in front of a building, and there were 22 Energy Efficiency Alberta vans sitting there in the middle of the day, large vans, beautifully painted, beautifully branded, sitting there idle. Who's paying for that, Madam Speaker?

On the carbon tax what are we hearing? Schools feel crunch of carbon tax. The schools that are educating our children, the next generation, the postsecondaries, the places of worship.

Seniors' centres could close their doors. I'm hearing from the seniors' centres in my constituency that they're getting complaints from their residents because they're trying to cover the costs of the increase of the carbon tax and minimum wage, and they're getting complaints. Madam Speaker, maybe what we need to do is to give them our Premier's address and tell them to talk to this government about why those rates are going up, why that has to be passed on by those operators so that they don't have to take that nutritious meal off the table, that extra salad, that podiatric care that they may receive, those extra services that are delivered. Where are they cutting back? Where are they cutting back to meet the deficit, the hole that is created by irresponsible actions?

Carbon tax driving agriculture out. All pain no gain. Fifty-five per cent of Albertans received no rebate cheque, or it was less than

what they paid in carbon taxes. Then, back to the seniors, there are the clawbacks from the seniors so that when they get the cheque, they're passing it on again, sometimes to their detriment.

More stats and facts on the irresponsible, multigenerational debt that has been created and is continuing to be created in this budget by this government: \$1.9 billion in debt servicing this year; \$3.7 billion in debt servicing by 2023. Madam Speaker, did you know that cumulative debt servicing through 2024 will be \$17.6 billion? That's a lot of schools. That's a lot of hospitals. That's a lot of roadways. That's a lot of infrastructure. That's \$17.6 billion just in debt servicing. That, to me, is irresponsible, and it's spending that absolutely does not benefit one Albertan one little bit, as I think has been said by many of our members here, as we're enriching bankers across the country and around the world whom we are borrowing from to achieve this, to fill the gap between our irresponsible spending and a lack of creation and growing the pie for our economy.

This budget does not constitute a plan. It lacks any credible detail. It's an aspiration, barely, from one of Alberta's leading economists. We hear negative trends, debt burden, rapid debt accumulation placing a bigger burden on taxpayers from many fronts. These are what we're hearing from Albertans, Madam Speaker. Layer upon layer upon layer of irresponsible spending, irresponsible budgeting, irresponsible sacrificing of future generations' earning power and wealth creation, that they'll be saddled with for generations. I worry not only for my children, who are young adults, but I worry for their children, that we're going to pass this down two generations. Shame on us.

Then there is the coal shutdown, capacity markets, pipelines, social licence or the lack thereof, flight of capital, lack of business confidence, political risk. When did anybody in this House, anybody in Alberta think that Alberta was going to be a place of political risk, below some banana republics in the world? That's where the capital is going, Madam Speaker, because the perceived political risk there is less than it is today here in Alberta.

Regulatory burdens, unintended consequences, crime, social and mental health impacts, and a list of ideologically driven, job-killing, investment-repelling issues: Madam Speaker, this is what Budget 2018 looks like.

When I talk to Albertans, when I talk to those seniors and they are complaining to the manager of the seniors' home, again, I say: "Maybe you're talking to the wrong person. Maybe you're complaining to your seniors' centre manager. Maybe we should give you the e-mail address for this Premier so that you can send your comments about how that's impacting your life by e-mail to this cabinet, to this government, that irresponsibly is mispending Albertans' money."

Madam Speaker, this is what Budget 2018 looks like. If this is a recovery built to last, it is really more of a debt built to last longer. I'll say that again: not a recovery built to last, but debt built to last longer, two or more generations. They tell us this is a recovery built to last for working people, but what if you can't find a job after two, three, or even four years? Is this a recovery built to last for people that aren't working? Those people are coming to me. I see grown men and women coming into my office saying that they haven't worked for two years or are having struggles paying their mortgages. They're not sure that they're ever going to work again. They're dipping into their retirement savings. Some of them are now having to sell their homes to reduce their monthly expenses so that they can continue to live.

9:30

Again, I say to those people: thank you for coming in; thank you for sharing that with me as your representative in this House so that

I can speak strongly to that. But we want to make sure that they know that the source of that is the ideologically driven policies, the regulatory environment, and, yes, Madam Speaker, the budgets of this government over the past three years. Again, I say to them: you can come to me and I will share your message, and I will take your correspondence and I will pass that on to the appropriate people, to the cabinet of this government. Again, I'm quite happy to say: there's a Premier's office here, and you can have that e-mail address, and you can send those complaints and those concerns directly to them and copy me.

Madam Speaker, when I mentioned earlier about the Premier's address, I meant the Premier's e-mail address. Of course, we ensure and respect everybody's privacy and respect their security. But that e-mail address is a powerful, powerful tool for Albertans to voice their opinion. Now, a year from now we'll have an opportunity to do that in the polls, but in the meantime Albertans need and want to be heard.

This government tells us that they are controlling spending to return to balance, but it is purely on a wish and a prayer. As I said before, Madam Speaker, hope is not a strategy. We hear of efficiencies to balance the budget by 2023-2024, but nowhere do we see meaningful efficiencies from a government that believes austerity is a four-letter word. Last time I checked, it was not.

We hear of plans to tightly manage discretionary spending, but the only tight management we see is from the growing PR and anger machines. If I hear "lowest net debt to GDP ratio" one more time as we climb to a \$96 billion debt, I just might have to return to university for a refresher on that statistics 101 course I took, where it is clear the Minister of Finance excelled and where the first textbook they gave us was *How to Lie with Statistics* by Darrell Huff. Anybody who's taken statistics in this province has probably had that book as one of their textbooks that they carried around, *How to Lie with Statistics*. We hear that, Madam Speaker, each and every day.

We read that our risks include prolonged market access issues even though this government led us, with their friends and chosen advisers Tzaporah Berman and Karen Mahon at the helm, on a rather enlightening journey of pipeline-approving social licence.

We hear that highly indebted households remain vulnerable to a faster than expected increase in interest rates, but then we have a government that doesn't think that the same principles apply to our provincial treasury, particularly with a downgraded credit rating, which we seem to face. I think many of us on this side of the House are worried we're going to see the next announcement from Moody's or DBRS or one of the bond-rating agencies on how this government is going to have to pay more to service that expanding and rapidly growing and irresponsibly growing debt.

We're reminded of the potential for strong growth in oil production even though the attraction of capital remains suspect and is predicated on market access growth while having been complicit in the death of Northern Gateway and Energy East, Madam Speaker. We can't grow it if we can't get it to market.

Madam Speaker, I consider myself an eternal optimist, a born-and-raised Albertan, entrepreneurially spirited. I've had an opportunity to thrive in this province, and I want to make sure that my children and my grandchildren have that same opportunity. I will continue to fight for a return to the Alberta advantage irrespective of who is at the Alberta helm. That is our responsibility as Albertans. But it is clear that this government's recovery built to last is but a weak PR exercise. It has turned me into not just a skeptic but a fierce detractor of the policies of this government, that can only be driven by misguided, irresponsible, myopic ideology, which defies, to me, the characteristics that have made Alberta the



best place to make a living and to have a great life, where everyone can reach their fullest potential.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was somewhat hesitant because I thought you were going to say: questions under 29(2)(a). But it's not available at this time if I'm reading your expression correctly.

Madam Speaker, it's a fine day in Alberta. As an agriculturalist, as a farmer it's sometimes frustrating to be in this Chamber when I could be out at my farm, which is where I love and would be happy to be, but I also have a full and absolute responsibility to represent the constituents of the proud and diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. It's my responsibility, and through my life I've done and tried to effect those responsibilities to the best of my ability.

It's a pleasure to be in this place as well to share my thoughts today on Bill 15, Appropriation Act, 2018. This bill is all about the budget, all about money, all about the government's inability to control spending, to control debt, and to control or not any sort of fiscal restraint instead of going towards critical, compassionate services that Albertans rely on.

I'm going to relate a historical quote made in 1935 – I believe it was 1935 – by the then Premier, William Aberhart, who said: if Albertans haven't suffered enough, it's their God-given right to suffer some more. Madam Speaker, I'm hopeful that Albertans, as we go forward with this commentary, will understand the direction that this government has taken on them, and given an opportunity to express their opinion, they will do so with full and forthright vigour.

Madam Speaker, this government would rather pay ballooning interest payments to big banks, and it's frustrating because there are lots of many different ways that this money could be spent. It's an absolute disgrace that the interest we are paying is more than most of the government departments' total budgets. It's seriously hard to comprehend how much damage to our kids and grandkids this government is doing. Imagine – simply imagine – how many schools and hospitals that would buy. Some members on the government bench know and have lived in the rural areas, and they know what it's like to be in rural, remote areas, where facilities like that can mean the difference between life and death.

How many seniors in my riding and others in rural areas have helped to build this province, not singularly in rural ridings but across Alberta? These people have helped to build this province, and they are the fabric and backbone of what and who this province is. Could this money provide service to them in their twilight years? Absolutely.

Madam Speaker, as a person who's lived within six miles of the social experiment known as Saskatchewan my whole life, I question: where is this province headed? Numbers don't lie. The debt-servicing cost in 2018-19 is \$2 billion; 2019-20, \$2.4 billion; 2020-2021, \$3 billion; 2023-2024, \$3.7 billion. That's with a capital B. It hurts this old head to think about some of those large numbers. I can't comprehend that. As I said, my son is in the process of taking our farm implements, and we're putting the crop in the ground. Many producers are understanding the extreme budgets that go into their farming operations, but they don't do it with a capital B. Some might be into six numbers but not seven or eight.

9:40

It's obvious, Madam Speaker, that these folks have no plans to pay down the debt, debt that may reach approximately \$100 billion by the 2023 term. One hundred billion, with a capital B. That's a lot of burden to saddle future generations with. By 2020 debt-servicing costs will simply exceed \$500 per Albertan, more than double what they were in '16-17. That comes courtesy of the Fraser Institute, which I know some of the members opposite take great umbrage to and make fun of.

Funnily enough, though, the government says that they have a plan. It's a plan, though, that they did not share with Albertans, much like how they failed to disclose their carbon tax to voters. I'm looking forward to this government in the next election disclosing their carbon tax plan as we go forward to an election. It'll be interesting to see Albertans' reaction to that.

When the federal government's carbon tax is set to increase, beginning in 2021, it will be diverted to general revenue. Madam Speaker, that's right, general revenue. It was right there on page 54 of this year's fiscal plan. It never mentioned that anything above Trudeau's \$50-a-tonne carbon tax would not be recycled back to Albertans through carbon rebates or green initiatives and that none of it would be sent to general revenues. The NDP promised that every cent of the carbon tax would be returned to Albertans. Remember that they mentioned that their carbon levy would be revenue neutral, but not so much now. Sorry, Martha and Henry; we forgot to mention that little nugget of information. Hopefully, that'll be on the front of the NDP election literature going forward in the next election.

That reminds me of something else that has been lost in the shuffle, Madam Speaker. Remember when the government opposite railed against the flat tax or how they vilified it, commenting on how it shortchanged Alberta? Well, the government increased those taxes across the board. In 2015 overall revenue from taxes brought in less than the flat tax did. Every year tax revenue fell short of this government's budget – every single year – not the greatest of records to hang your hat on. After all, it was the UCP and this opposition that told the government that this would be the result. Once more, the NDP failed to listen to common-sense advice. Their 20 per cent tax hike has resulted in, actually, less revenue and dragged down investor confidence.

Investors are fleeing the province. They can see through distractions and posturing. Remember that this government has had staff and members actively protest pipelines, the oil sands, and other energy projects. Not the PCs, not the Wildrose but the government, your government. Over \$30 billion in investment has left Alberta since the government, the NDP government, took power. Here are some examples, Madam Speaker. Murphy Oil sold its 5 per cent interest in Syncrude in April 2016. Statoil sold its Canadian thermal oil in December '16. Koch oil issued a letter to the AER requesting cancellation of their SAGD project in October 2016. Shell sold Montney and Deep Basin assets in December 2016. And it goes on.

Shell also divested oil sands assets to CNRL in March 2017. I know of CNRL because they actually have surface assets on property that I farm around, that actually became a disgrace because of low maintenance and poor weed control on their site. Should they be so kind, through their public resources people, to contact me, I'd be happy to disclose the LSD of that development – LSD means legal subdivision – and the marking of where the actual wellhead is. Marathon divested oil sands assets to CNRL in March 2017. ConocoPhillips divested the majority of their Alberta assets in March 2017. Madam Speaker, these numbers are alarming. They represent jobs, pipelines, and investment.

I have a good friend who drives a truck, and he hauls freight. One of his major occupations right now is hauling, as we call it, mobile iron, oil field assets, from a giant auction firm south of the city here to Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida. This gentleman is on the road full-time. That's his job, hauling these development assets out of this province and to other economical locations.

Madam Speaker, I'd now like to touch on the Trans Mountain project for a moment. Despite the growing uncertainty surrounding that pipeline, the government is counting on its revenue in their projections. This pipeline is nowhere near a guarantee. In fact, the other day I saw a news article saying that there's a possibility that Keystone XL may actually become a development prior to Trans Mountain. That's an interesting change of outlook. The pipeline is nowhere near a guarantee of getting built, and if the pipeline is just delayed, it will negatively impact this government's surplus financial projection. In fact, Kinder Morgan is already restructuring their labour force on the project, with 18 people being laid off from it to be reassigned.

Job losses are nothing to scoff at. After all, according to Stats Canada's March 2018 job numbers in Alberta zero full-time jobs were created in March. That's not very many, Madam Speaker. The square root of zero is still zero. Any growth in part-time employment? Eighty-three hundred jobs. Sixty-one hundred private-sector jobs were lost while the public sector gained 3,200. At 6.7 per cent Alberta still has the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada. Calgary has the third-highest unemployment rate of major cities, at 8.2 per cent.

Madam Speaker, I said at the outset that I've lived beside the NDP social experiment known as Saskatchewan my whole life. I happened to be doing some research, and a friend sent me some research regarding economies of the world. It would turn out that Canada is the 10th-largest economy on a global scale, by the information that I have. But it's interesting to understand that there is another jurisdiction that has an equal rate of economic growth and development. That's in one state, and it's called Texas. It's quite interesting that through policy it would make that kind of a difference. Not unlike Saskatchewan and Alberta, that were formed at the same time, Saskatchewan at one time had a greater number of people, greater amount of economic development than Alberta, but they chose at the time to take the CCF's supposedly visionary direction, and now we have 1.1 million people in Saskatchewan and 4.3 million or somewhere north of 4 and a quarter million people in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, for those of us that lived along the border there, as I have, we used to comment somewhat vociferously that the best thing ever for Alberta was Saskatchewan because some of the hardest working people and many of the people that we know who are committed to economic development are from Saskatchewan, but Alberta has received that benefit.

To try and be more realistic, Madam Speaker, the simple truth of the matter is that the NDP wants to tell Albertans how things are just great again, but Albertans are not buying it. The economics don't show that. This is a government that is deeply out of touch with everyday Albertans. In fact, Janet Riopel, the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce CEO, stated recently, "Are the difficult times truly behind us? That's not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever." That's from the *Edmonton Journal*, March 7, 2018.

While other similar energy-based economies recovered years ago, Alberta is still being held back by harmful policies from the NDP and the Trudeau Liberals. My friend from Calgary-Fish Creek so eloquently described Justin Trudeau as a fiscal hawk.

The investment in infrastructure is heading to business-friendly environments. Now, Madam Speaker, that's actually reversed in

this case. Saskatchewan is becoming a developmental leader, and I see that across the border. North Dakota, Texas, and Louisiana, where my friend hauls the oil field development iron coming out of this province, also are experiencing marvellous and excellent fiscal growth.

Madam Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk a bit about the effects all this debt is having on Alberta. Please let's revisit some previous points. We are paying almost \$1 billion annually in interest payments on the debt, and that's from Alberta Finance's 2017-18 second-quarter fiscal update and economic statement, page 9, for those of you who may be curious and for those of you who may be watching and following this closely at home. From the same document our debt is projected to reach \$70 billion by '19-20.

**9:50**

Most importantly, Alberta has now seen six – six – credit downgrades since the NDP took office. Moody's, Standard & Poor's Global, and DBRS are a few. Those are the three main credit-rating bureaus here. It's simply unacceptable that the government dismissed these actions as irrelevant. It's an accurate business thermometer of what's going on in the province. I don't think Albertans believe the government for a minute.

Madam Speaker, this budget is simply a mess. The government has now been trying to imply that because we vote against the budget, we are voting against funding police, firefighters, schools, and hospitals, and that's simply . . .

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

We are now on 29(2)(a). Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure this morning to stand and speak to third reading on the appropriation bill, Bill 15. You know, I have now been around this place for just over six years, and I've seen a number of budgets come and go. I have found it interesting to compare and contrast how those budgets are presented and how they are framed. You know, I rather chuckled at this particular budget's very optimistic-sounding title, *A Recovery Built to Last*. No. The only thing that's going to last out of this budget is the debt that you folks have built. The recovery is still very, very fragile, but I will tell you that the debt you're building: that's solid. That's solid.

You know, we stand here during the debate, Madam Speaker, and we hear – it's really interesting. They talk about looking at a glass that is either half full or half empty. Of course, the folks on the other side, especially the Finance minister, would have you believe that though the glass is really only half full, it's really overflowing because things are going so well. On the other side the glass is half empty, but you have folks saying, "No. The glass is broken, and it's leaking," and the glass is still half full.

You know, one of the things we were taught when I was in veterinary school, the very fine veterinary school in Saskatoon, that this government has seen fit to cut the funding to – they taught us that sometimes you can look at exactly the same situation and come up with different conclusions. I think that's sort of what we're seeing right here.

You know, I'm reminded of what Lincoln had to say about this. Abraham Lincoln once said: we can curse the rose because it has thorns, or we can praise the rose because it has flowers. The thing of it is that this government has chosen to only look at the flowers, the Official Opposition is certainly highlighting the thorns, and then the reality of it is that we have over 4 million Albertans out there

who are wanting to see a balanced approach. They are wanting to see an approach that is going to be sustainable in the long run, an approach that is in fact going to take care of all Albertans, that is not going to leave Albertans behind. Certainly, this government's approach is not going to get us there.

Now, over the course of the last three weeks, when we were in estimates, by my count I attended all or part of 16 of the 21 ministerial main estimates sessions. I did that because I wanted to have the opportunity wherever possible to ask specific questions of the ministers. You know, it would be impossible in the 15 minutes that I have here to really summarize all of the things we learned from that, but there were a few highlights during the course of that that I do want to point out.

The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance once again touted the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, and I asked him some questions about that. You know, he mentioned in his session of estimates that that is the measure that economists use to measure whether your debt is sustainable or not. I don't want to call down the economist profession. Economists are important people; they understand how the economy runs. But I also have heard that God created economists to make astrologers and weathermen look good. Economists make a lot of predictions, make a lot of forecasts, and the reality of it is that at some point those have to be mobilized. Those have to be actually put into some form of policy.

So when I see low debt-to-GDP ratio, well, you know, one of the problems is that Alberta has got a remarkably high GDP when you compare it to the other provinces in Canada. You know, the entire 2016 GDP by expenditure in Canada was something a little over \$2 trillion. The province with the highest GDP was the province of Ontario, with some \$794 billion of GDP and a population of 13 million. The second was the province of Quebec, with \$395 billion and their population of 8.1 million, roughly double Alberta's.

Despite that, Alberta's GDP comes in third amongst the provinces, not fourth as we would be by population, but in fact third. Alberta's GDP in 2016 was \$315 billion, just a little bit behind Quebec's, even though we have half the population of that province. We have less than a third of the population of Ontario, yet our GDP is approaching 40 per cent of Ontario's GDP.

Alberta's GDP, because Alberta is a productive place, is very high. If you're using debt to GDP as your measure, well, you've got a lot to work with there. Your denominator on that equation is really high, so you've got a lot to play with. Not only do we know that you've got a lot to play with on the denominator side, but you've also got a lot to play with on the numerator side of that equation, as was stated last night in debate by the Member for Calgary-Elbow. Now the terminology has changed from total debt to GDP to net debt to GDP, a subtle change but a really critical one to pretty up the numbers and make things look better.

You know, this is the kind of obfuscation that happens at budget time. I mean, I will say that it happened when we were in government, but these folks, Madam Speaker, have taken that to an art form. These folks have taken the obfuscation and the muddying of the waters in order to make things look good – they've taken that to a new level.

You know, the minister in his remarks also talked about, you know, that we wouldn't make deep cuts to income supports. Well, I hear fairly regularly from AISH recipients, who would really like to see this government actually do something about AISH payments, which haven't increased since our government increased them in 2012. They haven't indexed them to inflation, and those recipients on AISH are in fact falling farther behind under this supposedly compassionate government.

Let's look at some specific things, Madam Speaker, that this government has done that are clearly poor decisions. I have spoken

many times in this Chamber about the practice of siphoning away the tourism levy into general revenue. I asked those questions of the Minister of Culture and Tourism again this year. About a third of the total tourism levy, the money that is collected from folks that are staying in our hotels and motels and fixed-roof tourism properties across the province, is supposed to go towards the promotion of tourism in the province. It used to; 100 per cent of it used to go to fund Travel Alberta, the tourism department. Not a single penny of tax revenue, general tax revenue, went to fund tourism.

But now it seems that tourism is going to fund general revenue. Some 30 per cent of the tourism levy that is collected each year in fact is siphoned off into general revenue. We used to know what that return was. Back in the day we knew that every dollar spent on tourism in the province by the province returned some \$19.50 in taxation revenue to the province, never mind the economic activity. So for the last two years I've asked the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what is that number today? We were told, startlingly, last year that they've stopped measuring it. They don't know. They have no clue. They've stopped measuring it, and this is a quote: because that measurement was deemed to be not useful. Well, Madam Speaker, if you don't know what you're aiming at, you're always going to hit your target. These folks have no clue, zero clue of how they're aiming at.

**10:00**

You know, the other thing that bothers me about the way the tourism industry is being helped or, more correctly, hindered by this government: they always tout how it's an important part of their economic diversification, yet tourism spending was cut this year again, for the third year in a row. Tourism spending as a percentage of the overall Ministry of Culture and Tourism has dropped to 15 per cent of the overall ministry budget, the lowest level ever. People in the tourism industry are wondering why this government, that prides itself, supposedly, on economic diversification, has abandoned tourism, because that's what you've done. You have abandoned the tourism industry, so . . .

**An Hon. Member:** The numbers are up.

**Dr. Starke:** The numbers are down. The numbers are down. You know, once again, you folks love to say: oh, the numbers are up. No, they're down. A point of fact is that in every region of the province, with the exception of the mountain national parks, the numbers are down. They're down significantly, and the numbers for the province as a whole are down. The tourism levy is down, and it's because of the activities of this government.

Now, we talked a little bit and, certainly, the minister talked about the minimum wage. In the Labour estimates there was talk about how the government is very proud of this rush to the \$15 minimum wage. You know, virtually everybody has said: look, by all means, the minimum wage should go up. I support the minimum wage going up, but let's do it in a way that doesn't damage and cause hardship to already struggling businesses. Other jurisdictions that are going to the \$15 minimum wage in the United States aren't going to get there until 2022-2023, places like New York, places like California. But, no, Alberta under this government has to get there by 2018.

Then we find out that they don't even really understand the minimum wage. The Minister of Culture and Tourism during estimates said: well, most of the people on minimum wage in Alberta are single mothers. [interjection] Well, no, your Minister of Culture and Tourism said that most people in Alberta on minimum wage are single mothers – it's what he said – that 6.7 per cent of

those earning less than \$15 an hour identify as single parents. But to say that and to toss that out there and not have it challenged for its accuracy – members of Executive Council, members of the cabinet, that should know those numbers, are throwing out numbers just because they're thinking that nobody is going to actually challenge them on the accuracy of them.

You know, there are so many other things that this government tosses out there and thinks that it's not going to get challenged on. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade always likes to talk about how coal is a thing of the past. Well, explain that to the countries that are either building or planning to build 2,400 new coal-fired generation plants world-wide. I wish something I was doing was so going out of style that 2,400 plants were being built around the Earth.

You know, Madam Speaker, there are so many things about this budget that are wrong, but whenever you bring up some of the things – and the Minister of Health is very fond of this – there's always the blame on the past. I learned something a long, long time ago that I take rather great comfort in, and every time she does it, I smile, because the people who like to bring up your past and blame you for the past do that because your future and your present look a lot brighter than theirs.

I can tell you that the future of our province, I think, looks much brighter going forward, but it'll be brighter after this one-term NDP government is turfed out of office, this four-year sadness of interregnum that we will see from this government once it is gone and it is assigned, as it properly will be, to a footnote in Alberta's history. This government will be gone in about a year's time if they have the courage to call the election during the actual period or if they will hang on desperately till the fifth year, hoping, praying . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** That's pretty rich.

**Dr. Starke:** Yeah, I know.

. . . that the polls will get better, hoping and praying that those numbers will improve.

Well, Madam Speaker, a year from now, when Albertans, hopefully, are asked, this government will be reduced once again to this small corner of the Legislature, where they belong, and they will be punished, and they will be remembered as being the worst government in the history of Alberta. It is not a happy thing, necessarily, but a lot of that has been because of the fiscal mismanagement of this Minister of Finance. It's because of the decisions that have been made that perhaps are well intentioned, but they have turned out disastrously.

There's no question in my mind that when I look at the numbers in this budget, they are a mistake. The numbers here show that we're sinking into an ever-expanding pool of red ink, of debt, and because of that, I will be voting in opposition to Bill 15, in opposition to this budget. I certainly hope that it is this government's last budget.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 15. Now, I was entertained to hear the Finance minister introduce this bill when this debate started this morning, and I was entertained by him talking about eliminating Conservative waste. Well, that's a great start for the minister because it's probably one of the few things where he might be partly right. There's always waste in governments, but I can assure you

that it's not been the Conservatives that have been making waste the last three years. Listen, every government that ever has been has created waste, every government that ever will be will create waste, but the current team in charge of the good ship Alberta are really setting a standard like has not been set ever.

This is the same crew that started off with a billion-dollar surplus budget, a \$7 billion rainy-day fund, zero net debt, and has taken all those good numbers and flushed them down the toilet to have massive \$8 billion, \$9 billion, \$10 billion a year debt. They actually brag about lowering their annual deficit from something in the nature of \$9.1 billion to \$8.8 billion. They actually went out and bragged that this was progress, that this is really making things better for Albertans.

Well, Madam Speaker, we're having a political convention this weekend. I'll admit that probably some of our party members will wake up on one or more of those mornings with a hangover, but that hangover will go away within a day or two for those people. Albertans, after this government, after this term even, will have a hangover – hopefully, that's the end of the government; we don't know yet – a financial hangover. Children who have never had a drink in their life and may never choose to have a drink in their life will have a hangover, a financial hangover, that will last decades courtesy of the people across the aisle in this government today.

Those children, not old enough to pay taxes yet, 20 or 30 years from now will be paying taxes on 2018 paper clips because this government is buying billions for operating expenses. They will be paying 20 or 30 years from now for 2018 light bulbs. They will be paying for photocopying from 2018-2019. They'll be paying that 20 or 30 years from now.

That is a financial hangover that is inexcusable, that those children do not deserve, and that is being visited upon those children by this Alberta NDP government in this budget and all the previous budgets. They're saddling our children and our grandchildren with obligations that will take decades to pay back for paper clips from 2018. Paper clips. Paper clips, Madam Speaker. [interjections] You know what? I can tell that I'm getting under the government's skin because the anger machine is cranking up, and I'm hearing lots of noise from across the aisle. [interjections] You know what? They're not entirely wrong because part of what the money is being borrowed for is schools. Great. I agree. Those are good expenditures. The problem is that the debt will last longer in some cases than the schools will. Borrowing to build schools can be a good idea, but you need to have a plan to pay it back before the school gets knocked down.

**10:10**

This government has no plan to pay it back, not even dollar one. In fact, the last report of the outgoing Auditor General said that for this government to balance the budget after 2021, the government would have to be prepared to bring in, 25 in a row, \$3 billion a year budgets. I actually gave the Finance minister, two days ago in question period, a chance to look like he knew what he was doing. I said: can you commit to that? He refused to answer the question.

I said: well, let's go to the end of your budget, then, where you promise – this is a great promise – to have Alberta \$96 billion in debt by 2023. That's a wonderful promise. I don't think most Albertans think that's a wonderful promise, but this government actually has the courage, in fairness to them, to lay out in black and white just how abysmal their financial record and lack of planning are. I asked the minister, "Are you prepared for 24 or 25 years in a row to have \$4 billion surpluses," again giving him a chance to say that he's got a plan, and he wouldn't do it. Even when given the opportunity to commit to a plan, they will not commit because they don't have one.

Again, back to where I started, the financial hangover they are visiting upon Alberta's children and grandchildren is inexcusable, it's abysmal, and it's beyond the pale. They just keep bragging about making the numbers worse for Alberta, and while the numbers in an academic sense, I suppose you could say, don't matter, in a real sense they do because that is going to mean, in years to come, fewer social services for Alberta's poorest. It's going to mean fewer schools for Alberta's children. It's going to be fewer doctors and nurses due to the debt obligations.

The debt-servicing costs alone, Madam Speaker, not including paying down any of the debt but just managing the interest rates as they are predicted: this year, \$22 billion; by 2021, \$3 billion; by '23-24, \$3.7 billion. Not one time but every single year from then on. And who's going to pay for that? Boys and girls in grade 8 today, boys and girls in grade 3 today, boys and girls that haven't hit kindergarten yet today will be paying for 2018 paper clips purchased by this government, with no plan to pay for their own paper clips, at least not till 2023-24.

It's not like I'm making this up. The Finance minister stood here in this House repeatedly and admitted that and was proud of it. He says that that's making Alberta better, paying for 2018 paper clips in 2024 if indeed he can do that. I'm going to take his word for it: some small surplus in 2024. Even with that, his shiniest, biggest, best, least believable promise is to be paying for 2018 paper clips in 2024.

How – how – can these people look at themselves in the mirror when they're putting a budget like that on the table? How can they tell Albertans that that is a good budget? How can they actually look at Alberta's children and say, "We care about you" when they're saddling them with such an unbelievable debt, \$23,000 per man, woman, and child in Alberta, no matter how young they are, by 2023-24? And a big part of that debt will be paying for 2018 paper clips. Wow. Good job. Good job. Madam Speaker, this government is really rocking it for Albertans, I have to tell you.

But it doesn't get any better. They talk about diversifying the economy. Well, again, nonrenewable resource revenue in 2018-19 versus 2021 is expected to go up from 8 per cent to 9.3 per cent. That's a good thing. But I will remind the government that if the percentage of nonrenewable resource revenue goes up as a percentage of the gross domestic product, that means diversification is going backwards. [interjection] Yes. Again, this is so bad. A person doesn't – you can't actually make this stuff up. In fact, you don't have to, because the government's own numbers actually say how bad it is, just how abysmal it is. This is disgraceful.

Albertans are not happy. According to Janet Brown's poll for the CBC, Albertans trust Conservatives more than the NDP on education, on health care, on the economy, on virtually every measure. I think there were a couple where they edge us out, but on the vast majority they trust us more already than the folks across the aisle. And with all due respect, we haven't been in government, so we haven't really been able to effect a type of change. It's not so much that we've been doing great; it's how bad this government is. It's how bad this government is. [interjections] I love that the anger machine is cranking up here. It's great. It makes me happy because it actually makes it clear just how the truth bothers this government, just how badly the truth bothers this government. [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I said that we haven't been in government for the last three years. During those three years this government has made it so clear that they are so bad at their job that though we haven't had effective control over things because they've been in government, Albertans

trust us on almost every major issue. This government has messed up almost every major issue, not the least of which is this budget. My goodness.

Okay. If there's any Conservative waste left, then you should have had it cleaned up by now, but if you don't, clean it up. The NDP waste is astounding, \$8 billion, \$9 billion a year in deficit. The services are not better than they were three years ago. They promised a \$25 million surplus this year. They're delivering us a \$9 billion deficit. That's about 350-fold. That's the difference between a day and a year. That's how much this Finance minister is off in his estimates, the difference between a day and a year, approximately, the difference between one and about 350-fold, almost a day and a year. A day and a quarter versus a year: that's how much this Finance minister and this government have missed the mark.

That is incredible. That's incompetent. That's not paying attention to business. That is not caring about the future. That's thinking that if they spend their brains out, they might be able to get re-elected based on all the things they've bought if they could only distract Albertans from the massive financial hangover that they are inflicting upon them. It is massive, and there is no plan to pay it back; 2018 paper clips will be paid for we hope – and that's not even a sure thing if these people stick around – in 2023-2024. What a tremendously terrible track record, what a tremendously terrible legacy for Alberta's children and grandchildren to have to deal with.

While they're spending this money, they're not looking after rural crime. It's going through the roof, Madam Speaker. Though one of the most important things, the government can't get police officers out to rural Alberta. The crime rate is going through the roof, and this government, for all the money they're spending, can't make it better. When they're trying to provide officers, the best they can do is rob Peter to pay Paul, take officers from one detachment, leave it more short, and move them to another to leave it less short. Well, I'm glad they're trying something, but the fact is that when rural crime is that bad and their response is that toothless, for the \$8 billion, \$9 billion a year that they're putting Alberta into debt, you would think they could handle this thing and get the manpower there to deal with it. Even though they are spending far beyond what's coming in the door, they still can't provide the basic services.

There are a lot of important services the government provides, but it's been often said that one of the most important services the government provides is protection of the people, and they're not getting that right. No wonder Albertans trust us more than this government on rural crime and on urban crime and on health care and on education and on social services.

This crew wants us to vote for their budget, and when we don't, they will say that we don't support their education plan or their health care plan. They have no plan. They have a plan to spend more money and hope it's okay. To be fair, the government will educate Alberta's children – thank you for that – and there will be health care for Albertans, and thank you for that. But for the dramatic increase in debt and deficit that they're putting on Alberta's children and grandchildren, any improvement that they might claim to have pales in comparison to how bad they're leaving the financial situation.

Sooner or later Albertans know – this government may not, but Albertans know – the bill has to be paid. The bill has to come due. On behalf of the government I'll say to every kid in kindergarten in this province: sorry; you're going to get stuck paying in 2023-2024, or maybe when you have your first full-time job, paying for paper clips from 2018. That is symbolic of the incompetence of this budget, the incompetence of this government, the financial mess

they've put Alberta in in three short years – in three short years – and there's another year before Alberta gets to go to the polls and try to put a stop to it. I believe they will. I don't know. Again, I've often said that if I could predict the future, I'd be a lot wealthier than I am today.

**10:20**

Here's a note for the government: budgets don't balance themselves. Folks, you're going to have to do something different. Madam Speaker, the government is going to have to do something different. That's the lesson, and the lesson that we're going to try to teach today is by voting no. I've got a hunch that Albertans are thinking about whether they're going to teach a bigger lesson to this government a year from now because this government has not had their backs. This government isn't making life better. They're making it worse.

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

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

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just listening to the previous speaker talk about the budget and all the damage it's going to do to Albertans and to future Albertans, too, I think one thing that really strikes me is the \$96 billion of debt that we'll be in before this government is proposing that the budget will be balanced. Of course, this government hasn't been too accurate in any of its forecasts on anything financial, so I don't know if we've got a whole lot we can believe in with that. At that time we'll have \$3.7 billion worth of interest we're paying each year. Presently we're at \$1.9 billion worth of interest per year, and of course those are alarming numbers. Those are numbers of dollars that are spent to make bankers rich, not for bettering life for Albertans. This isn't making life better for Albertans.

This government, you know, with its budgets has created all these credit downgrades, which, of course, affect our interest rate. This government has brought in the carbon tax, that's made life more expensive for schools, for busing students, made it more expensive to run universities, made things more expensive for seniors, and made everything more expensive for families in Alberta. I can't believe that this government can stand here and say that they're making life better for Albertans when they're increasing this huge amount of debt and creating uncertainty in the marketplace.

For instance, in March, the month before last, no new jobs. All this economic pain that they've been inflicting, suggesting that there was going to be some sort benefit in the end, of course, is all just smoke and mirrors. They talked about how the carbon tax was going to get us a pipeline. Well, we've got two pipeline cancellations, and we still don't have a pipeline. This government is going to cause pain to B.C. residents, increasing the price of their fuel. They're offering to pay for this pipeline. They're doing all these things that the carbon tax was supposed to do, and it obviously didn't. They're driving investment away with increased taxes, with the regulations, with permit processes that take years and years and hundreds of millions of dollars for these companies. Of course, what do we have? We've got pipelines cancelled.

I wouldn't mind hearing the previous speaker just elaborate a little more again on some of these things, how this government says that they've got the backs of Albertans and, really, they don't.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. The member reminded me of some remarks I didn't get to here this morning. The government's plan is poor and untenable and

unbelievable as it is. It's going to require, in my view, more than one pipeline, and at this point they're not sure of getting one. If they get one, we'll cheer for them, and to be clear, if they get one, it'll be largely because they've finally taken the advice of our leader to put some pressure on the good folks from British Columbia and on their close personal friend Justin Trudeau. Nonetheless, we will congratulate and high-five the government if they get this pipeline built.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'll hold you to account.

**Mr. McIver:** Deputy Premier, you can count on me for that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Okay.

**Mr. McIver:** I will high-five you – you can take a picture – but I will also remind people that it's largely because you and your government took advice from our leader. But you will get your share of the credit, too. You will get your share of the credit as well. [interjections] No, no. We're cheering for you. We're cheering for you because we're cheering for Alberta. We're cheering for Alberta. Madam Speaker, when this government does actually do something for Alberta, we're with them a hundred per cent. That's why you'll find us in support of Bill 12.

But the point is that even if they get the pipeline, it won't be enough to balance their budget unless they do other things differently. To answer the hon. member's question, we will be there to give them advice on this, and for the sake of Alberta's children and grandchildren I sincerely hope we get this pipeline built. All of the negative consequences this government has wrought on Albertans' children and grandchildren will only be worse if they don't get the pipeline, because that pipeline is in the budget. Without the pipeline that \$96 billion debt will be bigger because the Finance minister has admitted they're depending upon the pipeline to keep the deficit down to \$96 billion. Now, that's an odd phrase: keep it down to \$96 billion. Who would have imagined that that would be a phrase used in Alberta at any point? But those are the depths that this government has taken this province to.

They haven't got a plan, which is why we're concerned. We sincerely hope they get a pipeline. We're going to help. We have been helping. We'll continue to help the best we can. But the government has taken us down such a wrong path that even if they get a pipeline, they'll be paying for 2018 paper clips in 2023-24.

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

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

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to move the division bells to one minute for the next vote.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, is there anybody that would like to close debate?

Seeing none, I will, then, put forth the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:27 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Jansen	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

10:30

Against the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Strankman
Drysdale	Nixon	Swann
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gotfried	Pitt	van Dijken
Hanson	Smith	Yao
Loewen		

Totals: For – 38 Against – 16

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

(continued)

[Adjourned debate May 3: Ms McKitrick]

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

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to stand in this Chamber and speak to Bill 9. I want to be very clear. My hope, for this country and other countries, is that there is never ever another abortion. It pains my heart that women have to go through that, but again, being a male, what do I know?

I am going to support this bill, but I want to paint a picture and the reason why I support this bill and the 50-metre setback, because I think it's important. I think back on my career as a paramedic. There have been three calls. We know that posttraumatic stress syndrome for some people just one day clicks in. It could be anything that triggers it. I'll tell you what: with those three calls that I attended, if I ever have posttraumatic stress syndrome, it's probably because of those three calls. Those three calls were where women self-aborted their child.

Now, you can't imagine walking into a bathroom where the floor is filled with blood and water and the patient is on the ground bleeding to death, and what you see is a fetus torn in two. This wasn't 50 years ago. This wasn't 100 years ago. This was in this past decade. No woman should ever have to feel alone. No woman should ever have to go through that. No paramedic, no firefighter, no police officer that comes across that call should ever have to see that. I will never ever forget that. I will never erase those memories.

When we speak in this House about these issues, they matter. We disagree on them. Like I said, I do not want to see a woman get another abortion ever. The way that I believe we achieve that, based on my faith, is that we work in the community with people. We

educate people. We care for people with compassion and understanding, with love. That is how we are going to get to the heart of this issue, trying to curb abortions through education.

I'm going to suggest to this House – to the government, to the Official Opposition, to everybody – that this is not a political football. This is not something where we are trying to pin somebody back and forth trying to earn votes. We're talking about women's lives. We're talking about the lives of children inside the womb. Let's show some compassion. Let's speak honestly about this. Again, no woman should ever have to go through the things that I've seen them go through and having people deter them at the doorway. Again, I think the people in these clinics are well intended to try and educate women, give them the best care, the best support. A 50-metre setback I think is reasonable. That's why I'll be supporting this bill. But, again, let's not make this a political football. Let's move on and vote on this bill.

Thank you.

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

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the Member for Calgary-South East. That's the reality, I think, of too many not only in this part of the world, but it's certainly even worse in other parts of the world where there is no access to abortion, where, whether it's through rape or unintended pregnancy or failed contraception, it is going to continue.

We're going to need to have abortion services, and as regrettable as it is for both the woman and the aborted infant, it is a reality of our current life. I think it's important, to focus on this bill, that we recognize that there are some very strong feelings – ideological, religious, moral, and personal convictions – on both sides of this issue and that there's no easy answer. What I have come to is a similar conclusion. If we want to reduce the complications of pregnancy, if we want to reduce the harm done by self- or amateur-induced abortions, we have to make those available, and we have to reduce the stigma associated with seeking these legal, legitimate health services.

I have a major clinic in my constituency called the Kensington clinic, and that's clearly what has brought this very much to the fore for me, the increased activity on the street around this clinic and the failure of injunctions to actually limit the rather painful and, I would say, at times vicious attacks on women who choose this difficult, difficult option, a choice, indeed, between her doctor, her God, and herself. For other people to impose other kinds of admonitions, judgments, shame is not appropriate. It borders on hate speech. It borders on significant harassment and bullying, psychological bullying that adds to the trauma.

One has to believe that in the services we are now providing there is adequate counselling, that there is adequate education, that there is adequate prevention programming coming through our sex education in the schools. To that point, I would applaud the government for its announcement recently on consent education, starting in elementary school. Wow. It's taken a long time to talk about consent and nonconsent in a healthy way with children and young adults. That's much needed, and I hope that that will reduce some of the unwanted pregnancies that we see currently in our society.

Just to summarize a few relevant items, B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador have passed similar anti-harassment legislation. More than 75 per cent of abortions in Alberta are provided at either the Kensington clinic in my riding or at Woman's Health Options in Edmonton. The rest are done, a

limited number, in hospitals. Perhaps that's appropriate. We're not taking up beds, we're not taking up expensive hospital resources when this can be done fairly well and safely in clinics. People can be appropriately managed as outpatients in that context.

10:40

I also mentioned, as I will repeat, that court injunctions do not work. The opposition leader says: if people don't like what's happening on the street, they can take them to court. Well, if he doesn't like what's happening, he can take it to court. Let's see how often he wants to do that and how easy that is.

The number of surgical abortions, fortunately, has not increased over the last eight years. It's still around 14,000, and that speaks to a lot of work that we still have to do to try to educate, to provide access for low-income people particularly, who may not be able to get access or who don't understand enough about the complexities of contraception to seek these appropriately.

Certainly, it's unacceptable to have women harassed, whether verbally or visually with objectionable pictures and physical antics on the streets, or preached at or anything that adds to the burden that they're already dealing with. If there's anything that needs to change, it's greater access to abortion services in those areas that have very limited access. That's primarily the rural areas in this province, that really deserve to have better access in this critical time, when we want to have it done as early as possible in a pregnancy, when complications are the fewest.

I won't belabour the issue. This is a legal health service. The pressure must not be on the individual who is having to make this very painful and difficult decision. I guess the political nature of this has been reflected in some of what's happened in this Legislature, with the opposition walking out in a debate. But that's not helpful to the debate.

What needs to happen is that we reduce the stigma, that we acknowledge the importance of this service from the point of view of health and safety and acknowledge that nobody goes into pregnancy wanting to have an abortion. These are unexpected, unintended, and in some cases really impossible situations that women have been placed in.

It also speaks, I guess, to the need for our communities to be more supportive of adoption and assistance throughout pregnancy, especially for those low-income single moms that can't cope with more. Maybe that says that we need to do more in terms of our community supports for young gals, whether married or unmarried, who don't want to have an abortion but don't feel that the supports are there for them to carry on either as mothers or, in fact, to adopt out in a reasonable way.

To the bill, I don't think there's any question that most Albertans repudiate the harassment and the call for them to simply take it to court if they feel violated or intimidated by street protests. That's unacceptable. It's not the Alberta way. It's not the Canadian way. I certainly will be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you. I want to thank the hon. leader of the Liberal Party and Member for Calgary-Mountain View for his wise words. I appreciate everything he said. I thought it was very well crafted.

You know, it was a little over a year ago when I got a call from the executive director of the Kensington clinic, and she said to me

that she hoped we would be examining the issue of buffer zones because they had seen a ramping-up of incidents at the clinic, harassment of staff, harassment of clients. Her concern was that every time they called the police, the protesters disbursed, and then as soon as the police left, they came back. I'm not a hundred per cent sure of the timing, but certainly it's interesting to note how much more activity there was around abortion clinics in the last year, year and a half.

I came in to have a conversation about it, and to my absolute pleasure our Health minister was 10 steps ahead of me on this. Really, it felt great. You know, in the area of social issues I wasn't used to that in the past. Certainly, joining an NDP caucus gave me an opportunity to really sit back and admire the diligent work of fine members like our Health minister and the way she cared about this particular issue.

You know, I think the enforcement piece is an important one to emphasize because if you don't have repercussions for behaviour, that behaviour will perpetuate itself endlessly. I think the folks who go out to these places understand there are no repercussions, so they feel emboldened, and the numbers grow bigger. It is hate speech, and it is bullying. The women who go to that clinic to exercise their legal right in this country have every right to do that without someone standing on the sidewalk and shaming them, because those people who are standing out there have no idea what their circumstance is.

You know, it was a little over a year and a half ago that I attended a rather infamous policy conference as a leadership candidate in another party. As I walked up and down the hallway – this is well documented; I've certainly given interviews detailing this – I was chased by antiabortion zealots who called me a baby killer because I supported women's reproductive rights. Without exception these folks were all supporters of a particular leadership candidate. I remember saying to some of these folks in that hallway at the Sheraton in Red Deer: please stop this. But they wouldn't. They were relentless, and when one stopped, another would start. This went on and on. I know there are folks who knew this was going on in the room. The fact was that in this leadership I wasn't even talking about this issue. These folks showed up because they were a galvanized community that were given a lot of feedback and appreciation from a particular leadership campaign that made them feel that they had a candidate who was going to help them get to a point where abortions could potentially become illegal in this province.

I don't think it's any secret that when we came into the House and we were charged with doing what we were elected to do, to have a conversation and a debate about issues of importance to Albertans, folks on the other side fled as fast as they could rather than have that discussion. Let's be very clear. This is not about free speech. This is about a woman exercising her legal, hard-fought right to her reproductive choices without being bullied by a far-right conservative group who feels emboldened in this province because they have leadership that has told them that they are making headway on this.

You know, that PC policy conference was no mistake. The message was loud and clear at that conference. The social conservatives who gathered there gathered there because they had a candidate who was willing to echo their far-right, dangerous, damaging, antifemale sentiments. Going forward, we know that there's going to be another policy conference this weekend, and guess what's on the agenda? I will tell you that our friends on the other side of the aisle, helped along by their federal counterparts, who have made themselves crystal clear on this issue, all feel the same way. They are actively interested in eliminating women's reproductive rights in this province, and I cannot be happier to be



part of a caucus and cabinet and to work for a Premier who will fight tooth and nail to make sure that they do not have the opportunity to do that.

**10:50**

We've seen in federal circles the election of MPs in Alberta in the last couple of years in by-elections who had antiabortion groups come forward and claim credit for getting them into their jobs because they went out and actively sold memberships, and they're bragging about it. Antiabortion groups in this country are bragging about leadership on the other side of the aisle and about how happy they are that they have advocates for this.

I can tell you right now that Albertans understand the value of women's hard-fought reproductive rights, and we are not going to stand for this. Every woman who accesses that clinic and, I hope, more clinics in this province, more opportunities for women to access what they have every legal right to access – I hope not a single one of them in the future has to ever walk that gauntlet and face a line of shame from a group of people who not only do not want them to have that right; they will not discuss any options that would create a situation where they didn't have to do that, like comprehensive sexual health education with conversations about consent.

You know, the whole pro-life moniker to me is absolutely astounding because as we talk about social issues in this House, we are talking about pro-life issues. This isn't a matter of not being pro life. This is a matter of women's choice in this province. We've seen south of the border what happens when far-right activists get involved, and we have seen incredibly concerning stories about states who now feel emboldened to create incredibly damaging policy and legislation that absolutely erode a woman's right to an abortion. We have states where you can't actually access one anymore, and you have to travel somewhere else to get it. I know that folks that I have listened to in conversations when I was part of another party were hoping that we would get to that point here in Alberta.

I can say that not only am I wholeheartedly supporting this bill, but I just want to say that for the men and women in this caucus, who are standing up for women's reproductive rights, I could not be more grateful for all the speeches, for the diligence, for the thoughtfulness in crafting their messaging. That, to me, is the importance of an excellent political process. For folks across on the other side of the aisle I really hope that you understand that your constituents make up more than just the far-right folks that you likely spend most of your time with. There are a lot of women in this province, and they vote, and I sincerely hope that in the coming year they think very hard about who has their back and who doesn't.

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

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

**Connolly:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the member for her statement. It was very passionate, and I want to thank her for her activism and her support for women in this province and for women who are just trying to access their basic health care. She brought up a good point, that there are people who want to make it so people cannot access abortion and their rights within Alberta.

This is already a reality for some Canadians. For the longest time in P.E.I. women could not access an abortion. They had to go to another province. In New Brunswick I believe – I could be wrong – the only clinic has shut down, so women in New Brunswick have to go to another province. It's horrible, Madam Speaker. When

women don't have access to abortions, when they don't have access to safe health care, a lot of women will do it themselves, and when that happens, women die.

I would ask the member if she wants to expound on this situation and how in many countries, even in Canada, this often happens.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Jansen:** I want to thank the member. You know, it's interesting. That triggered something. I remember having a conversation when we were discussing Bill 10, the original Bill 10, which ultimately made gay-straight alliances mandatory in the province where people asked for them. One of the comments from the people that didn't want to see this happen was: well, if kids want a GSA, they can go to court and ask for one. That was actually part of the conversation. My former colleague on the other side of the aisle is nodding. He remembers that conversation. So why don't we just let someone go to court and ask for it if they want something? We are legislators in this province. It is our job to create the law and the policy that protects people. We don't make a 15-year-old kid go to court to get a GSA any more than we need to make a woman go to court to have access to her legal right in this country.

You know, I've been thinking a lot lately about the turn towards the right in this province and how there seems to be a narrative out there about really espousing a lot more social conservative policy and ideas. It comes from a faction of people who now have a leader that represents those ideals to them. The concerning thing for me is that as we discuss what important policy looks like that protects citizens in this province, we are having conversations about how to create punitive policy for people and not supportive policy for people.

In addition to Bill 9, the buffer zone bill, and the other pieces of legislation and policy that we're working on, I think it's important for us to understand that in addition to this conversation we have to talk about how we support women better so that they don't need to do this. Nobody is pro-abortion. We are pro choice, and that is a choice for a woman to have autonomy over her own body. The fact that we are even having to have this argument in this House is a bit surreal to me. This is not a fight we should be having anymore. We should have moved beyond it. The conversation we should be having now is: how do we support Albertans with comprehensive sexual health education so that they have every tool at their disposal so that they can make healthy choices about their own lives? That's the conversation we should be having.

I hope that when we get to the point where we talk about curriculum changes, which are not the bogeyman, that encourage us to create healthier programs in that area, the folks across the aisle will be a little more present. If they are so against this, they should support the other.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 9, and I rise to speak very much in favour of this legislation. I believe in a woman's right to choose. I am pro choice because I believe in a woman's fundamental right to access basic health care at a time and place and manner of her choosing. I've always believed in that because it's not up to me or any other man or any other person to tell a woman what she should do with her own body. Women have a right to access basic health care and to do so without fear of intimidation or harassment.

**11:00**

I understand and respect that there are those who have an opposing view, and they are entitled in a free and democratic

society to have those views just as a woman is entitled to have access to basic health care without harassment. Free speech and free access to health care are not in any way mutually exclusive, and I was pleased to see when this bill was tabled that the government struck an appropriate balance, that the buffer zone was 50 metres, not a kilometre. It's consistent broadly with other legislation in other parts of this country. It is defensible in court. In some areas it goes slightly farther than other provinces. In some areas it does not quite as far as other provinces, but in my estimation it has struck a very proper and appropriate balance, so my kudos to the government for doing that.

You know, to those who would say that bill isn't necessary because all you need to do is go to court to get an injunction, I've done some research and had some conversations on this bill, and I understand that those injunctions, in addition to being costly, inconvenient, and time consuming, are also not consistent from one jurisdiction to another. I understand that in Edmonton the injunction does not cover the public sidewalk where women and their families and supporters would come and park their vehicle on the public road, so protesters can be right there, barring them from even exiting their vehicle, and the injunction in Edmonton doesn't cover that. Interestingly, apparently in Calgary it does, but even still, there are some inconsistencies. That is a problem that needs resolving, and this Assembly absolutely has the power to do that.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

You know, there are those, like I said before, who would consider themselves to be, I guess, "pro life" would be the term that they would choose to use to self-describe. That is a view that is allowed to them, of course, in a free and democratic society. But if there are those in the Official Opposition who hold those views, I will not suggest you should – well, I would suggest you should change those views, because they certainly don't match mine and I don't think they're helpful for women who would choose to exercise their rights over their own bodies, but you're entitled to that view. I would, though, expect that if you hold those views, say so on the record. Let's use the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for what its purpose is. If you feel that this bill isn't necessary, if you feel that the laws that exist in this province are appropriate, then say so. Be on the record and have the guts to do that.

Unfortunately, it looks like we have an Official Opposition who, if news reports and public statements are to be believed, will choose not to vote at all on this bill. I think that's an absolute abdication of your responsibility as a legislator. You're letting down your own constituents. You're trying somehow to play some middle ground, and I don't really quite know what the game is that you're playing.

The claim that this is simply a political trap for the Official Opposition to fall into: well, you know, based on what I've said previously and my understanding in doing some research and in talking with women and with stakeholders and just friends of mine is that this bill is absolutely needed. It is only a political trap because the UCP has made it a political trap. They've decided that through their response to this. Frankly, the walkout when the bill was originally presented at second reading was one of the most remarkable and shameful things I've ever seen in this Assembly. So I would encourage the UCP, when the bill comes up for the vote later today, to reconsider, to be on the record with your views. There is no abstaining in life, and this issue is no different.

Access to abortion services is something that we need to look at in terms of access not just in the big cities, in which there is reasonable access. In rural areas it's less so, and I was pleased to see reports that the minister is working actively to expand access to those services closer to where women need them.

I'm also pleased to see the Member for Calgary-Mountain View talk about prevention, talk about consent and the importance of teaching consent in school, the sex ed curriculum. A good, robust sex ed curriculum allows women and men to understand contraception, to understand their choices, to hopefully make good choices with their lives such that abortion would not be necessary. It will be in certain cases, either through mistakes that happen or through some very, very tragic and trying circumstances, and women will have to make that difficult choice. So prevention and sexual education and contraception, while important, are not the total answer.

I guess as I wrap up my comments in terms of the need for this legislation, I just want to read a direct quote from someone I had asked about this. I'm just going to read exactly the words that she said to me.

As a woman the most concerning thing about anti abortion protesters is their sense of entitlement over my time, my body and my agency. It is no one's business what a woman and her doctor decide is the best health care choice for her. I believe whole heartedly in free speech but it cannot include harassment.

Again, remember that these are the words of the woman who sent me this e-mail.

I do not condone characterizing seeking an abortion as a "vulnerable time in a woman's life." It can also be a relief and or liberating or sorrowful. It's not up to anyone to characterize abortion for a woman. Each woman's experience of abortion is unique and the "vulnerable" trope feeds into a characterization of women being weak and needing help.

The "debate" about abortion belies an inherent desire to control women and their behaviour. The misogyny behind [it] runs very deep.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's probably the best place to end. There's no question that the bill is needed to protect a women's fundamental right to exercise choice over her own body.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, any other members wishing to speak to Bill 9? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased with a lot of the things that have been said so far on this topic about Bill 9. I'm of the age that I remember very clearly a time when abortions were not legally allowed. I remember the dilemma that young people I knew went through in making the decision whether to terminate a pregnancy or not, what the choices were, what the dangers were. These were well-educated people who knew what their decision could mean in the long term. It was very important, and it was very thought provoking and worrying.

Now that it is seen as winning that particular battle, not meaning that everybody would rush out and change the way they did things but that it would take one – having the option to have a legal abortion meant that people could make their decision with less worry about their future such as: would they have one? It is a matter of choice, as has been said many times. It gives women – it confirms their ability and their right to have a decision over their own actions, over their own body. This is something that the other half of the population has never really seemed to think should be an issue, but for women it's been something that they've had to fight long and hard for.

Then to have the situation now, where the right is there to access a legal abortion but the means of acquiring it are impeded by a lot of negative voices and people who want to stand in the way? They're not invited. There is no consent there. These are people who are unwanted obstructors of a legal procedure. This is simply

unacceptable any way you look at it. This is a violation of human rights.

**11:10**

I'm trying to think of situations in which people might think this would be acceptable, which it would be clearly, legally not. I'm thinking about when women first started acquiring postsecondary educations and some people objected to that, and it was clearly wrong, clearly a biased way of looking at things, gender biased, and that was overcome. To think right now, in 2018, of people standing in the road of a woman going to university is just unimaginable. But in some countries, of course, it could happen, and we think of those places as being places that need to have a lot of work done on their human rights legislation and their way of thinking about things.

To think that right now in this country where we live people are, as I said, feeling entitled to harass and castigate, insult, shame, embarrass people that are already going through one of the most difficult decisions, one of the most difficult stages of their lives, something that no one wants to be in a position to feel like they have to do – this is a choice that was made. They're doing it. It's difficult. And then they have this added heap of humiliation on top of that. It's just unimaginable. When I think about anyone I know – my daughter, a granddaughter, a friend – having to go through that, I think, you know, how horrific.

This should not be allowed anywhere, nor would anyone in this Chamber think that it was acceptable for people, like I said, members of our family, our friends, to treat them in that manner if they made a decision that someone else didn't like. Really? If you don't like someone else's choice or behaviour, legally allowed behaviour, or decision, that you're going to have the right to do that I find so absolutely, horrendously objectionable.

Yeah, that's really about it. I think this bill goes a huge way toward stopping that practice. Hopefully, some people who, like I said, have thought that they had the right to get in the way of other people's decisions maybe will sit back and do a little thinking about their own behaviour now. It would be nice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 9? The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I really have too much to add to this conversation that hasn't already been said by many folks in this Assembly. It's heartening to hear support and understanding from men and women, whether or not this is something they've experienced.

I just, first, want to take the opportunity to say thank you to all of the women in this caucus and outside of this caucus who fought this fight when it needed to be fought. I'm lucky that I have grown up in a time in Alberta and in Canada where I always knew that abortion was something that I could access if I needed to. That wasn't always the case, as has been illustrated by some of the other women here. I know that it was a hard fight and that it was fought at a time when women did not have the equality and did not have the equal respect in society that we are fortunate to have today. We're still not as far as we need to be, but we're getting there. So I just want to take the opportunity to thank all of those women and doctors and health professionals and the men who supported them for fighting the fight to make sure that abortion was something that we could have legal access to here in Canada.

I'm also fortunate – and this is something that has been brought up here before, that no one wants to have an abortion. What are some of the things that we can do in order to prevent the need for

that to happen? One of the things, that has been mentioned previously, is good-quality, comprehensive sexual health education in school. I was lucky when I was a teacher that I had the opportunity to bring in the Calgary Sexual Health Centre to do the sexual health education in grade 8 at my school. They did an amazing job, and it was something that a lot of the girls – I taught at an all-girls school – didn't have access to at home. It wasn't something that their parents talked about, so it was an opportunity for them to really be aware of what their options are and to learn and to ask questions in a safe environment.

I was lucky that I was the recipient of incredible sexual health education, which I know was not universally the case in the '90s, when I was going to school. I'd like to give a shout-out to Ms Gamble and Ms Perry, who were my grade 8 physical education teachers and who did an incredible job of really just good, comprehensive sexual health education. They made it possible for me and armed me with the knowledge and the tools necessary so that this wasn't something that I've ever had to go through. I thank them for that, for giving me that opportunity and that knowledge, that I didn't have to worry about this being something that had to be an option for me.

I really appreciated the quote that the Member for Calgary-Elbow read from the woman who wanted to express that we need to stop framing women who choose abortion as victims. I'm not one to say why women are choosing abortion. The reasons that women might choose this option are as varied as women themselves. For some women, this might be an incredibly hard decision; for others, it might be a relief. But I'm not one to be able to characterize their choice. All I know is that this is a choice that's available to them, and they should be able to exercise it free from harassment, as has been mentioned.

The argument for this bill is simple. It's that any woman who chooses to access this legal health procedure should be able to do so in a manner that is free from harassment. They don't deserve to be filmed. They don't deserve to have things thrown at them. They don't deserve to be shamed. They don't deserve to be yelled at. These are all things that happen regularly, so this is a bill that will help women access a legal procedure free from harassment, plain and simple. There's not really too much more to it than that.

If you could imagine for a second a comparison that has been drawn in a somewhat ironic sense by women in the United States and sometimes here. If this was a protest that was happening regularly outside a vasectomy clinic, you would be hearing about this. This would not be allowed. It wouldn't be something that was considered. But that's a health procedure that men are entitled to choose and is legal, and they're entitled to do that, and we don't see people outside protesting that. What this gets to the heart of is the fact that people who oppose this are fundamentally opposing women and women's rights. It's just as simple as that. It's the kind of thing that really shows. It's like, you know, your misogyny is showing if this is something that you oppose, because you wouldn't oppose it if it was a man, plain and simple.

I also, you know, in my remarks, like to try to address questions that the opposition has – and I think that other folks in this House have done it fairly well – because it appears that the main problem that the UCP has with this bill is that they're claiming that we're using it as a political ploy. I can say, like many of the rest of us, that I was fortunate to go on a tour of the Kensington clinic that the Member for Calgary-Bow organized – I think it was well over a year ago, possibly two years ago at this point – and this was a concern that they had. It was a valid concern. The health professionals who worked there and the women who were accessing the service were seeing increased harassment. This was something that they came to the government and asked for.

The other side likes to talk about consultation. Well, here we go. We consulted with people. They asked us for something that was reasonable, and we're doing something about it. So it is not a political ploy. It is something that was asked for by the men and women who are providing the service, so we're doing something about it. You know, I think it's fair to say that it is absolutely not a political ploy. It's something that is reasonable. We're not impeding anybody's free speech.

Also, I would say to the members that, like, I believe in this democratic institution, and I believe in this House. I believe that if your constituents really oppose this bill, then you have an obligation to stand up and tell us about it. I've got some letters from people who have opposed this bill, and I've responded to them. It's not a large number of people, but I do have people. If you really feel like you're adequately representing your constituents by saying that the majority of them oppose this, then, you know, I don't begrudge your right to get up and do it. I like to think that freedom of speech is important, and that extends to our job as MLAs to stand up and represent our constituents here in this House.

I believe I will conclude my remarks there. I'm supportive of this piece of legislation, and I would encourage everyone else to do so as well.

11:20

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, are there any other speakers to the bill? The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill because it has many things that have resonated with me as this bill moves through, and the discussions that we had both in caucus and in cabinet were very revealing as to the nature and the spirit with which we approach this piece of legislation.

When I was 17 years old, I had many good friends but one very close friend who told me one day – actually, we were having a conversation, and it just so happened that the conversation took it to the place where I was feeling comfortable enough to tell her that I was gay. Her reaction was, first, shock and then laughter, and she said, basically, “Yeah, I kind of knew.” And I was like: “Really? That's great.” And we laughed a little bit, and then she started crying. I asked her what was wrong, and she said to me, “I'm pregnant.”

Now, at 17 – she was the same age as me – I don't know that it was something that she had really thought about or something that she had considered, but definitely when she talked to me, she just didn't know what to do, and she didn't know where to go and find information. You have to remember now – I'm dating myself – that these were the days before the Internet was available and before information was readily at the hand tips of somebody's cellphone. You know, you had to go through a phone book, if anybody remembers what those look like anymore.

The conversation that she and I had was very impactful to me, and I just listened to what she was telling me. At the end of the conversation I simply said to her: “Listen, I love you. If you need me to help you in any way that I can with this child that you may have, I'm there. We'll get an apartment somewhere, move in.” It was always something that I wanted to have, a family. I'm blessed to have them. At that time I knew that I wanted to have a family, and I said, “I'm ready for that.”

But I also said to her, “If you need me to accompany you to an abortion clinic, I'll do that, too.” She said: “Tell me what to do. Give me your perspective. What would you do if you were in my place?” I tried for a second to put myself in her place, and I just simply couldn't because it was really not anything that I had any

say whatsoever on. It was her decision, and one decision that over a period of a few weeks she agonized over, over and over again. We would talk, and she said, “You know, I think I'm going to keep this baby.” Then an hour later she was changing her mind, and she was very, very heartbroken about this. The agony that she went through is not something I wish on anybody. The agony that she felt was in everything. Her personality changed. Of course, it's a very impactful to thing to think about.

Now my daughter is 21 years old. I mean, I've raised this child, and I've seen her, and I'm so very proud of the young woman she's become. As you know, we have three young babies in our caucus. Being a parent is a very, very difficult thing, right? But not everybody is ready to be a parent at any given time, and it really does take a lot of soul-searching.

That process that a woman goes through, imagining what she must evaluate, what she must think about, what she must consider when she's making that decision, should not be influenced by outside forces that are constantly bombarding her with these awful messages. As recently as a little over a year ago there were pamphlets delivered to my home of very graphic pictures with respect to abortions, and I was very deeply disturbed. I remember having this conversation with my daughter. I said, you know: “What does this mean to you? How are you affected by this?” She was the one who brought the mail in. She said, “I don't know why this is even allowed.” I said: “Well, it's freedom of speech. That's what it is.” She said: “I understand that, but it's not something I would want to see. Imagine if I was going through that process myself. Like, how would this help me to make a decision? It wouldn't.”

In fact, getting back to the original story, my friend – well, actually, you know, it doesn't really matter what her choice was. The point is that she made a choice. She had that right. She had absolutely that right, and the only thing that I should be allowed to do is to provide her unconditional support in any choice that she makes. The only thing that anyone needs when they're going through something like that is to have information that is scientific, that would allow information to get to that point where she has all the facts. Then you step back, and you allow that process to take place.

I don't for a second believe that a single women who has had that procedure done has done it just because she woke up that day and decided she was going to have an abortion. The thought of that doesn't even cross my mind. It has to be something that is a complete turmoil spiritually, physically, all kinds of things.

From my perspective, when we're talking about this, every time I've marched in a pride parade, there have been people holding signs saying: God hates fags. I've seen it. Every single parade, somebody is usually standing there and doing that. Frankly, I could do without that. Seriously, I really could. But there is that freedom of speech, and I respect that, and I understand that they have the right to their position and to their opinions however wrong it may be in my opinion. However, they do have that right.

The other thing, though, is that in this situation I am not making a life-altering decision. I am choosing to express myself in a pride parade. A woman walking into an abortion clinic is making a life-altering decision, and that decision needs to be made in safety and in the absolute most dignified manner possible. I cannot, in my mind, ever be supportive of anybody who does not understand that a woman's most basic human right is the right that she has over her own body. It is simply not acceptable to dictate what she may or may not do with her body.

Some people out there have a lot of interest in what happens with people's, I guess, ultimate autonomy over their body. I mean, it's both curious and peculiar at the same time. You know, I really don't

think I'm that interesting, to be honest with you, but apparently some people really care about who I sleep with. Frankly – you know what? – that is nobody's business. It is something that when we come down to it, again, every time we have these kinds of discussions, all of a sudden it becomes a political issue. It becomes politicized, and this is the most unbelievable thing for me because a person's human rights should never be something that becomes political. Unfortunately, we have folks in this province, some of them sitting across, who would deny people like me access to a GSA. When I was younger, I wish I had had them. Quite honestly, my life would have turned out very differently.

**Mr. Eggen:** I got it going as soon as I could.

**Miranda:** Thank you, brother. I appreciate that.

The thing is that a woman has no fewer rights than I do to exercise the choices that I make. A woman should always have access to information, medical support, the ability to exercise that autonomy over her body at every step of her life.

It doesn't stop here. We need to continue working because there are many, many issues that we need to resolve, but on this particular issue I have absolutely no problem whatsoever to say that I am incredibly proud of the work that my colleague the Minister of Health has been doing. She has sat down, and she's done what every human being ought to do. She sat down, and she listened to women, and she heard what they had to say. She sat down and heard what their concerns were. She sat down and heard why this was important. Then she brought it to our cabinet and to our caucus, and we had a discussion. I was so proud of the conversations that were taking place, because not one person said: this is wrong. Everybody, in fact, said: we need to move this, and we need to ensure that we're creating a safe space for women. That is why we're here today, because of all the conversations that we've had and all the information that we've gathered and all the folks that we've talked to.

**11:30**

Of course, I've also received, as did the Member for Calgary-East, e-mails, and I've explained that this is the reason why we're doing this. Some of these e-mails were very misinformed because they were, again, being generated out of sheer misunderstanding or perhaps misrepresentation of the facts, intentionally done, to the point where, you know, they were asking me, "Why are you banning people from protesting?" I said: "No. This is going to be a 50-metre buffer zone. People can still protest. They still have their right, but their right to protest should not impede a woman's right over her body."

This is not the oppression Olympics here. What we're talking about is every Albertan having access to medical services. Every Albertan has that right universally, so if these services are legal in this country and there is a way for a woman to receive them without putting her body at risk – you know what? There are places, like the country I'm originally from, Nicaragua, where abortion to this day is still illegal. I can tell you, from conversations with my mother, that there are still young women who die because these abortions are performed not in the most hygienic way. It's not done in a clinical setting, and unfortunately many end up suffering from sepsis and subsequently dying from the infection. Is that really what we want for the women in our province? I don't think so. If that's where the folks across the way are going, I'm sorry, but that's just absolutely wrong, reprehensible, and I cannot even – there are a million other words that I could use, but it's just something that I would never stand for.

I am very blessed to have been raised by strong women who, without even realizing, were raising a feminist in my family, and I'm very proud of the strong women in my family. I have no reason whatsoever to doubt that they have every capacity and ability to make those choices for themselves. That commitment that I made to my friend many, many years ago is the same commitment that I made to my daughter. I have had this conversation with her because I think that as a parent you need to have these kinds of conversations. I've always said that this is something that could happen. "If you're ever yourself in that situation, know that you can come and talk to me because what you'll hear from me will be, in fact, three things: I love you, I will help you if you decide to have a child, and I will be the one to drive you to an abortion clinic and walk through whatever it is I need to walk through with you and hold your hand if that's what you need." Those are the things that I can do as a parent.

Today we're talking about legislation that will actually do that for every single woman in this province, allowing her to walk with dignity, allowing her to access medical services which are legal in this country without anybody obstructing their access, without anybody challenging their decision, and without anybody making them feel worse than they already do, because they have made a very tough decision at that point. I am very proud to see our government stand up for women in our province. I personally have, like I told you, dealt with this issue at a very early age. I've learned so much since then, and I'm sure that there's a lot more that I could learn. I will be one of the many, many Albertans who will stand with women in this province and say to them: your body, your choice.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to be in the House today speaking to Bill 9, unfortunately as the only conservative who will actually be speaking to this bill at all. It's disheartening that there is not a single conservative voice in the House that'll be speaking to this bill other than myself. That's unfortunate. I think we have a duty as MLAs and elected officials to speak to legislation regardless of whether we like the bill or not.

On this side of the House we vote against a lot of government bills, but at least most of the time we show up to debate it. [some applause] Well, don't give yourself too much applause. You skipped the debate on the motion I had on Monday. But we'll have to give you a pass on that.

This is an important piece of legislation. You know, some have argued it's just political, meant to raise the issue of abortion, which is a divisive issue that a lot of folks don't want to talk about. But, on the other side, there is a genuine good intention to the bill as well.

You know, being a man, I am never going to be faced with the decision of whether or not to have an abortion. That's, I suppose, a blessing because it's got to be one of the toughest decisions a woman could ever be faced with in her life, and I can only imagine that for most people that's not going to be an easy issue. What we think about it morally can be very different than what we think about it legally and politically. You might believe that it should be entirely open and accessible legally, but you also might have moral questions about it personally, and that is a moral question for someone to address between themselves, their doctor, and God. When a woman makes that decision, I think we need to support her, love her, be there for her, and help her make the best of the decision whether we agree with that decision or not.

Now, my wife used to live in Kensington in Calgary, very close to where the main Calgary abortion clinic is, and she can't recall

ever seeing protesters there. There certainly have been protesters, but it's not a very common occurrence.

**Dr. Swann:** It's actually very common.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** My colleague from Calgary-Mountain View says that it's very common. I've never seen it myself, but I take him at his word. There have been protesters there, but I don't believe it's a daily occurrence.

But I do believe that those protesters are not doing themselves or the cause they stand for any favours. The vast majority of pro-life Albertans that I know detest the idea of standing outside of an abortion clinic and protesting not abortion but protesting the women themselves. That is very different. That's personalizing it, and it's not compassionate, and frankly it's not very Christian. Those folks who choose to stand outside of a clinic and protest are not just protesting something they disagree with; they're protesting the women themselves. They're not saving a fetus, as they might hope, and they're not advancing their cause. I think it's an absolutely detestable way to make your point.

There is merit in legislation that will protect women from undue harassment or intimidation or even stalking, but I believe that legislation needs to strike an appropriate balance. All legislation is a balance. No legislation is purely black and white, as much as we frame most things as black and white, and I'm guilty of that on many things. I see economics a bit more black and white than these kinds of issues. These kinds of issues require a very delicate balance, especially between the need to balance protecting women and their access to health care on one side and protecting freedom of expression and assembly on the other.

I believe it was John Stuart Mill – I'm sure the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster will correct me if I'm wrong – who said: I may disagree with you, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it. I know I'm quoting and getting the person wrong as to who said that.

**11:40**

You know, it is so important. If you support freedom of speech, you support freedom of speech that you disagree with. It's always easy to support freedom of expression and assembly for speech that you agree with. The real test is if you'll support it when you disagree with it. I disagree with the people who protest outside of abortion clinics, but I will defend their right to speak. At the same time, they don't have a right to harass anybody. They don't have a right to film anybody. They don't have a right to scream at people or to block entrances. Those are not reasonable things.

Much of this is already covered under the Criminal Code and court injunctions. The Criminal Code already prohibits harassment and intimidation, threats, and assaults. Now, some have argued that the police can't always be there. That's a fair point, but passing a law saying that they can't stand there in the first place isn't going to particularly change the frequency of the police being there. There is no other law that I can find that forbids persuading or informing other people regarding a moral or political issue. The bill prohibits expression not based on form or place but based on content.

Now, you have to forgive me. Those of you who have had to hear me drone on in private know that I've made a lot of Roman references lately. I'm listening to a very long, extensive podcast on the history of Rome. In it they describe the founding of the 13 laws. This is when the Romans finally codified their laws during the early republic or the midpoint of the republic. These were 13 permanent laws that would be cast in bronze and mounted in public places. They were cast in bronze because these could not be changed. These were, effectively, a sort of constitution in a way. One of the most

important laws was that no law could be passed that targets an individual. Laws had to be general and broad. Now, they didn't always live up to that, certainly, but it was a principle that they had.

This is a law being proposed that is overly specific. It targets one group that I think broadly most of us don't agree with. I'm sure there is probably a wider range of views in the House and in the public in general on the topic of abortion, but I think almost all of us agree that protesting outside of an abortion clinic is an outright cruel and nasty thing to do. But a law should not target a specific group because we disagree with their political views. If we believe that a bubble-zone legislation is necessary to protect people from harassment and intimidation or being blocked from entering a place, then we should have a law that applies more broadly, that applies to protecting the rights of anyone to enter and exit a place, that they can't be blocked by abortion protesters or, say, union picketers, that if they're trying to enter a restaurant, they can't be screamed at by activists.

Now, these things vary in how important they are. I think that an abortion clinic is a particularly more sensitive issue, but laws need to apply in general and not target one specific group whose social or political views we might disagree with.

I've tried to come up with wording for an amendment that would adequately amend this bill to keep in place the protections that the Minister of Health is proposing for women trying to access an abortion clinic but that would apply more broadly to pretty much everything. We have some basic laws around protesting: that you can be there but can't harass people, that you can't block people, that you can't film them, et cetera. But Parliamentary Counsel informed me that that amendment would be too extensive and beyond the scope of this bill, so I would not be able to adequately make it.

Instead, I'm going to propose a reasoned amendment. I have five copies here for distribution. I'll hand these to a page here.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, if you can just wait until they start distributing.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yeah.

**The Acting Speaker:** This will be amendment RA1.

Please proceed, Member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have tried to propose an amendment that would work within this bill that the Minister of Health has proposed so that I would be able to support it. It actually wouldn't have changed too much of the actual content of the bill as it applies to the intent she is trying to achieve, but I wanted to vastly broaden its scope so that this would not target any one social or political group whose beliefs or views we may have issues with.

As I said, Parliamentary Counsel said that that amendment would be outside the legal scope of the bill, so I am not allowed to do that. So, unfortunately, I have to propose a reasoned amendment calling on the government to shelve the bill temporarily and come back to the House with a new bill that better balances protecting women's access to health care with freedom of expression and assembly.

Mr. Fildebrandt to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the following:

Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not appropriately balance the need to protect individuals from harassment with the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and further input from the public is therefore necessary.

I understand that the members opposite and the Minister of Health are eager to get this bill passed. Frankly, I would be as well, but the changes to the bill – we’ve already worked out the wording. It’s quite manageable and easy to do. We could bring back the bill during this very session, before we break for Stampede in the summer. We can get it done before we break for session, and we can get it done in a timely manner. It’s actually a relatively simple change to the bill. It’s just broadening the scope. It leaves in place all of the protections that the Minister of Health is proposing that we have in place, most of which I don’t think are entirely unreasonable.

We can quibble with how big the bubble zones should be. I think it might be a bit broad to have them half a kilometre away. We can quibble with those details, but if we are hoping to achieve this, we could shelve this bill at this immediate point and come back Monday with a new bill, very simple changes to it, that broadens its scope and protects all Albertans from harassment, intimidation, or being filmed unnecessarily when there’s a protest going on.

It’s been my honour to speak to Bill 9. Again, I’m saddened that there is only one conservative voice in the entire Legislature speaking to this bill. I know that there are members of the Official Opposition . . .

**Dr. Swann:** What about your colleagues here?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** There is a Progressive Conservative. That’s fair enough.

You know, I do know that there are members of the Official Opposition who will take issue with this bill in their hearts. I know that there are pro-life members of the caucus, there are pro-choice members of the caucus, and like the public more broadly, there are a lot of shades of grey in the moderate middle on the issue.

Regardless of where you stand on this issue, this is not an issue about abortion to me. This is not a pro-life or pro-choice issue. This is about protecting the dignity of people to go about their lives, in this case a woman accessing an abortion, if you agree with it or not, and it’s about freedom of expression and assembly. The issue of abortion in this is a bit of a red herring. We need to focus more broadly and achieve a better balance in this legislation, and I wish that all members of this Chamber will stand up and debate the bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the reasoned amendment?

Seeing and hearing none, any members wishing to speak on the amendment? The Minister of Health.

11:50

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I just need to clarify that half a kilometre is 500 metres, so this is actually a tenth of half a kilometre. It’s very reasonable. I actually had the opportunity at the Kensington clinic, where the staff complained to me about this about a year ago, actually, to walk the 50 metres, and it’s less than a city block. I think this is very reasonable. I also think it’s really important that women be able to enter their doctors’ appointments without harassment or intimidation. I’m sure that I’ll have an opportunity to talk about that more once we deal with this amendment.

With regard to this amendment I have to say that I feel that this totally disrespects the intent of this bill. This bill was brought forward by women who’ve been impacted by this as either patients or staff members working in these clinics. They expect us to act on this quickly. They expected the former government to act on it 30 years ago, when they brought this forward. The government failed to do so then. They expect our government to do so now. I’m very proud to be standing with the women of this province to bring

forward legislation that will make their lives a little bit easier during such a time of important decision-making and accessing the health care services they’re legally entitled to.

That being said, I think it’s important that we deal with this amendment swiftly. I recommend to my caucus that we vote no on this, and to any others who are here as well, because I think it’s totally counter to the intent of this bill, and I don’t think it would help the legislation in any way. So I will be voting against this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly, I will also be voting against this amendment. I feel that it is a delay tactic and would solve a problem, frankly, that doesn’t exist in the bill. I think this bill strikes exactly the right balance of freedom of expression. The government has actually been quite reasonable in the bubble-zone parameters that they have chosen here. As you’ve heard from my earlier comments, I think it’s, absolutely, badly needed legislation to protect a woman’s right to exercise choice over her own body and access to legally permissible health services.

Thank you.

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

Seeing and hearing none, any members wishing to speak on the amendment?

Seeing and hearing none, I’ll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:53 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:  
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Carlier	Gray	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Payne
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Clark	Jansen	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Starke
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Fraser	Miller	Woollard
Goehring	Miranda	

Totals: For – 1 Against – 41

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:09 p.m.]









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