



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, 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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Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
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Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 3, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the consul general of Ukraine to Canada, Mr. Andrii Veselovskyi. Alberta's ties to Ukraine go back 126 years, to when the first Ukrainian settlers chose our province as their new home. Since then Ukrainian Albertans have made Alberta a better place, and we continue to build and expand our relations with Ukraine across culture and trade, especially under the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. We are also very happy to hear that Ukraine intends to open a consulate in Edmonton later this year. We look forward to working with the consul general and his new colleagues when it does. I would like to now ask our guest to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you the grade 6 students from High Prairie elementary along with staff and parents here for the visit. It's wonderful to have you visit from High Prairie and Big Lakes county, in the riding of Lesser Slave Lake. It's especially impressive as I understand that you had to get up at 5:30 in the morning to get here. The students are accompanied by teachers Mitch Hammond, Joanne Murphy, Andrea Pollock, and Melissa Isaac, and, of course, the parent chaperones: Tracy Pratt, Shannon Calahasen, Karen Janzen, Samantha McNutt, Belinda Dieppenaar, Robyn Pattyson, and Dan Cooper. I'd ask everyone to please rise and receive the warm reception of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the organizing team and guest speaker for the pride event in Northmount park. I'll be speaking more about this event later in my member's statement. My guests are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise as I call their names: first, our guest speaker, Chevi Rabbit; my constituency manager, Maria Vicente; from Northmount Community League, Meagan Plamondon, president; from Dickensfield Amity House Executive Director Tracy Patience and Jenn Lee, preschool teacher; and from the Alberta Sex Positive and Community Education Centre, Angel Sumka. I would ask that we please extend my guests the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I believe there are a couple of school groups. Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you on behalf of the Member for Stony Plain 26 amazing students from the school of SML Christian Academy. They are joined today by their teacher, Gary Skoye, and their chaperones, Annette Visser and Shelley Kulak. I would now ask the guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 30 students from Muriel Martin school, just a short distance from my own home. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Rhonda Surmon, today along with their chaperones, Jacqueline Kelly and Heather McDonald. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my good friend Labiq Nazar. She's a small-business owner in Edmonton-Ellerslie and also happens to be a constituent. I met her a few months ago. She's a tireless advocate for diversity and inclusion, and she's a great volunteer, who's now part of my electoral district association. I'm happy to welcome her. Hopefully, one day we'll see her on this side of the House with all of us in this caucus. Please provide her the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you guests from the Canadian Celiac Association. May is Celiac Awareness Month, an opportunity to educate Albertans about the disease. The Celiac Association is asking Canadians to go beyond the guide and to be alert to the atypical features of the disease and the impact that it has on the whole body. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder where people experience negative health impacts from eating gluten and must follow a gluten-free diet. Thank you to the members of the association for their tireless efforts to raise awareness. I invite Brian Readman, president of the Edmonton chapter; Jim Calverley, president of the Calgary chapter; along with other members and volunteers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests today? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Mr. Jason Smith. He's a member of the SCI Red Deer chapter and is here with a couple of his friends to listen to question period today. If we could give them the warm welcome of this House, that would be great.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

2016 Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to salute the residents of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo and the more than 100,000 Albertans who were affected two years ago by the Horse River wildfire. The massive evacuation from one of the most damaging wildfires in Canadian history was two years ago today. Over that two years much has been done to help Fort McMurray and area recover. Rebuilding of the homes and buildings lost during the fire continues, lessons learned from the fire have informed the area's wildfire mitigation strategy, and there's been a renewed focus on FireSmart initiatives and measures to reduce the threat of wildfire in every community in the region.

Much has also been done to help the residents of the area recover. The province, in partnership with other levels of government, has supported mental health crisis teams, community wellness programs, indigenous and vulnerable population outreach teams, supports for school wellness, and increased AHS staff, including mental health therapists. We know, Mr. Speaker, that recovery from such a natural disaster is a slow and uneven process. Everybody affected was affected differently, and some may take longer to mend than others. We also know that fires are a constant threat in Alberta, and the smell of smoke in the area may be enough to trigger memories and reactions.

For those people who live in the area, please know that the Wood Buffalo region has some of the most experienced and dedicated professional firefighters in Canada, and they will be ready to respond. Please know that the province and its emergency services are there to help now and in the future. Please know that our health and mental health services are there for anyone who asks. Please know that we understand that recovery is not an easy road. The people of Alberta and your provincial government are here for you.

Health Services Procurement Process

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, in 2014 Alberta Health Services' hand-picked appeals committee determined that a \$3 billion lab RFP process was flawed. They found there was reasonable apprehension of bias in the award to an Australian company with no presence in Alberta or Canada. AHS had not taken reasonable steps to mitigate such bias. Improper considerations or influence could not be ruled out. There was a lack of transparency, and AHS had breached its duty of fairness. Eventually, this government decided to cancel the RFP for policy reasons.

Fast-forward to today. It seems AHS is a slow learner. The air ambulance RFP issued in 2013 and subsequently withdrawn was reissued in 2016. Despite having three years to get it right, AHS is currently embroiled in controversy because it ran a procurement process that was unfair, nontransparent, and breached numerous best practices. Over the past few weeks we've tabled documents relating to the \$800 million air ambulance RFP and asked numerous questions of the government. The nonresponse indicates the government either didn't care or doesn't understand. It is ultimately accountable for what AHS does.

What did it do? Specifically, it manipulated the procurement process by ignoring its own policies regarding a fair, open, and transparent process; accepted a bid based on conditional pricing; amended the RFP criteria throughout the process, after the RFP was issued, to favour certain proponents; failed to conduct appropriate due diligence; refused to release the fairness report of its adviser, despite arguing the fairness proviso was what the adviser said was accepted; and accepted a bid notwithstanding the selected proponent having no hangar in the base location or any prospect of getting one.

Mr. Speaker, there are other breaches. There is the obvious issue of wasting time and money continuing to defend the indefensible, money that should be dedicated to front-line services. There is also the real consequence of a loss of trust in AHS. The public questions whether patient care and services are what truly matters. Vendors simply stop participating in processes they feel are rigged.

It is now time for the Minister of Health to act. However, as we've seen, the minister seems to be preoccupied with partisan attacks and pushing divisive issues instead of actually doing her job and holding AHS accountable for unfair procurement practices.

Ms Hoffman: I can chew gum and walk at the same time.

The Speaker: Hon. member.
Calgary-Elbow.

1:40 Calgary Area Flood Damage Mitigation

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the start of Emergency Preparedness Week. Unfortunately, our province is particularly susceptible to floods, fires, tornadoes, and other natural disasters. Albertans should be justifiably proud of AEMA. We should also all be prepared, but being prepared isn't limited to the actions of individual Albertans. The government also has an obligation to prevent damage from disasters wherever possible.

As we approach the five-year anniversary of the southern Alberta floods, it's time for a reality check. We have choices when evaluating options for addressing preventable damage from things like floods. We can choose to follow the advice of unbiased world experts to build the most effective and least expensive infrastructure to protect from flooding, or we can give in to those who either oppose for the sake of opposition or have a direct interest in pushing an inferior option.

Since 2013 a lot of work has been done, but it only accounts for about 30 per cent of what's needed to prevent the loss of billions of taxpayer dollars, damage to the downtown core and retail businesses, and, most importantly, to reduce the risk to human life. Let us never forget the five lives who were lost in the 2013 floods. It was only through the action of first responders and simple good luck that it was not a lot worse.

Also in the past five years both the PCs and NDs looked at more than a dozen independent studies and decided that the Springbank reservoir is the cheapest, the most effective way to prevent future flood damage on the Elbow and that a water retention reservoir on the Bow is the best way to mitigate floods and address long-term water needs and drought mitigation. No project is without impacts, but the public interest of the million or more Albertans who rely on downtown Calgary for their livelihoods means that 20 Springbank landowners will unfortunately need to sell their land for fair market value. I wish there was an equally effective option that didn't require buyouts, but there simply isn't.

The debate over flood mitigation feels, at times, like the battle to build a pipeline. There's clear public interest, a positive return on investment to Albertans, and the objective facts for Springbank to be the best option, but much like the pipeline debate, opponents will use every tool at their disposal to stop it. If we can't build basic infrastructure that will save millions of taxpayer dollars and protect human life, it's fair to ask if we'll ever be able to build anything anywhere ever again.

Thank you.

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

Gas Station and Convenience Store Worker Safety

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In December 2015 Edmontonians were shocked to hear of the deaths of two convenience store workers in Mill Woods. Arrests for this crime occurred on Terwillegar Drive, in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. Many of my constituents work in convenience stores or gas stations or they have family members who are potentially exposed to violent criminal activity. This makes protecting these workers a major priority for me and for our government.

Six months ago it was a pleasure to join with all MLAs to pass Bill 19, An Act to Protect Gas and Convenience Store Workers. Bill 19 updated the occupational health and safety code to make enhanced safety regulations mandatory, including prepayment of fuel and violence prevention plans. By the time of passage Husky Energy and 7-Eleven Canada had already implemented the prepay and violence prevention procedures, and subsequently many other retailers have followed suit. All Albertan convenience store workers and gas station operators will be protected by June 1, 2018. I've spoken with many such workers in my constituency, and they appreciate the enhanced safety. My constituents who have had to make small adjustments when paying for gasoline in prepaying or using a credit/debit card at the pump are also very supportive.

Another important benefit of this legislation is reducing the workload of our police. The reduction in criminal fuel-theft incidents will allow them to focus on other policing activities. Chief Knecht of the EPS reported that 60 such events happened monthly in Edmonton in 2017.

This problem is not just an urban issue. It's a real issue for rural Alberta, too. The fatality in Thorsby in October 2017 was a dire reminder of this. Indeed, over the past three years five convenience workers have died and three others have been seriously hurt in Alberta.

It's notable that this common-sense legislation was supported by all MLAs in this House. May we continue to work together to make life better for all Albertans, including our most vulnerable workers.

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

Pride Event in Edmonton-Decore

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like all of Alberta, my riding of Edmonton-Decore and north Edmonton as a whole is home to numerous members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community. I've had the privilege of visiting the GSA at Queen Elizabeth high school and was inspired by the courage and compassion of the students and teachers who participated. I'm also proud to be part of a government that has done so much to recognize the fundamental human rights of all Albertans.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is still prejudice and abuse directed at the LGBTQ2S-plus community, and my office continues to hear complaints about that, which is why I'm especially happy that this year Edmonton-Decore and north Edmonton will have a pride event of their own. My office together with Dickinsfield Amity House, Northmount Community League, and the Alberta Sex Positive Education and Community Centre, are planning a fun-filled evening of activities that will include: free consent seminars taught by ASPECC; free clothing, shoes, and accessories for all genders inside Northmount hall; LGBTQ2S-plus resource fair; and activities for children that will include face painting and a story time.

Our guest speaker for the evening is none other than Chevi Rabbit, who was the first transgender person to be named to *Avenue*

magazine's top 40 under 40 list and has organized the annual Hate to Hope rally in Edmonton to combat all forms of hate.

I'm very proud of the work that our government has done to protect the rights of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, and I'm extremely proud to be a part of Edmonton-Decore's first pride event. I would now like to extend an invitation to all members of the Assembly to attend and participate in a truly inclusive and caring evening. In particular, though, I would like to invite the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, and the entire opposition caucus. June 14 at Northmount from 6 to 9 p.m. Hope to see you there.

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

Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago Mary Ellen Neilson invited me to tour the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured, also known as ARBI, in the community of Spruce Cliff in my riding of Calgary-Currie. Since then I've returned on multiple occasions and have attended their annual Stampede breakfast and Christmas open houses because, as I learned on my first visit, their important work is making lives better.

You see, ARBI provides intensive community-based, long-term rehabilitation and support for survivors of traumatic brain injuries related to falls, car crashes, sporting injuries as well as to nontraumatic brain injuries caused by strokes, infections, or lack of oxygen. All these services are unique to ARBI, unique because this rehabilitation program brings together professionals and volunteers on-site and throughout the community. Studies have shown that this leads to significant improvements for ARBI's clients. ARBI's novel approach has been accredited by the Alberta Council of Disability Services and is funded annually in part by the government of Alberta, but last year secondary supports coming from various charities were cut, leaving the more than 150 clients at risk. After working with Mary Ellen Neilson, the executive director of ARBI, and the Minister of Community and Social Services, I was pleased to announce last week with the minister that our government had ARBI's back and would provide \$400,000 of support over two years.

You know, I saw the joy, Mr. Speaker, on the faces of the clients and the volunteers at ARBI, and it was one of my proudest moments as an MLA to see how a relatively small amount of money, at least by government standards, could bring so much help to 150 Albertans who are in need of this support. ARBI is going to be having their 40th anniversary this September, and with this extra funding it is definitely going to be one worth celebrating. To all the folks at ARBI who are dedicated to enriching the lives of survivors and their families by providing both hope and support, I thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by more than 900 constituents of Calgary-West. They're petitioning the Legislative Assembly

to urge the Government of Alberta to continue to fund educational programs of choice – including, but not limited to, independent . . . charter, and home education options in Alberta – under the current inclusive provincial education funding model, without reducing current funding rates, as indicated within the Education Funding in Alberta Handbook 2016-2017.

I present this to you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

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

Market Access Task Force

Mr. Nixon: It is 29 days until the Kinder Morgan deadline. It's been 70 days since the Premier declared victory and called off the wine ban. Meanwhile we see headlines like these: at least 18 workers fired this week as a result of suspension in nonessential spending on Kinder Morgan. Yesterday we now see that the government has announced another work group on this file, but all the while the clock is ticking. My question is to the Energy minister. Is this task force an admission that the previous Market Access Task Force has been a failure?

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see this Conservative opposition willing to stand in this House and share their opinions on this topic. Our government is fighting for pipelines so that everyday Albertans benefit from our natural resources and more good jobs. Albertans are behind us. We've seen recent studies that show that over 80 per cent of Albertans support the Trans Mountain expansion. It's about time we got support from the members opposite to make it happen.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has a history of taking verbal action and then not taking any real action. It's been several months since the access task force was created. The Minister of Energy is on that task force. My question to her is: are those meetings still ongoing, and when was the last time that this task force met?

Ms Hoffman: It's nice for the member from the opposition to talk about verbal action. It would great if we saw verbal action on all issues that matter to Albertans from the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

I can't actually tell if the opposition members are among the pipeline supporters or if they're trying to see them slowed down. It certainly doesn't seem like they are being supportive. The Conservative leader has advocated for this project to be tied up in court, Mr. Speaker. It would lead to further delays. Who else thinks that sending it to court is a good idea? Oh, yeah, that's right. John Horgan. You keep using Mr. Horgan's playbook; we'll keep standing by our Premier, who's getting results on pipelines, and we will get it to tidewater.

Mr. Nixon: It's interesting that the Energy minister will not answer that simple question. Instead, the Deputy Premier will get up with partisan rhetoric that had nothing to do with the issue that we're talking about.

Albertans are concerned about this pipeline. This is the number one issue facing our province right now. I've asked a simple question. Are the meetings for the access task force still ongoing, and when is the last time that that task force met?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? Thank you for the question, and as the Deputy Premier I have the honour of responding to it. I have to say that we will certainly see the results of the good work that's happening. We've already seen them, for example, in British Columbia. A hundred senior British Columbia businesses,

indigenous leaders, community and labour leaders are flying out in two weeks to build a bridge between our province and British Columbia. They will be meeting with our government, and collectively we will get shovels in the ground. Let me be clear. We will not stop until our pipeline gets built to tidewater.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Nixon: Well, it's disappointing, again, that the Deputy Premier will not answer a very simple question. In fact, it appears that she won't allow the Minister of Energy to stand to answer that question. Instead, you just get partisan rhetoric and absolute panic from the NDP government. It must be their poll numbers or something, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the Energy minister: has the task force met? Yes or no? When was the last time it met, and what did you discuss?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're really proud to be discussing what is happening, and what's happening is that we're moving people all across this province towards a yes. We're moving people all across this country towards a yes. We will be very happy to tell you exactly how that strategy worked out, but you're not going to stand behind the Energy minister, peek over her shoulder, and tell opponents to pipelines what cards she's got in her hand. We're not going to let that happen. I'm proud of the results our Energy minister is getting. I'm proud of the fact that we've got our approvals. We've got the majority of Canadians standing with us. It's about time the Official Opposition did the same.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government has a history of standing in this House and declaring victory when there is no victory, stopping wine bans when really nothing has happened or changed in B.C. – we still have a pipeline being blocked – and now continues their history of just standing up with partisan rhetoric about what we are not discussing. I have not asked what the minister's cards look like; I simply asked: when is the last time that the task force met, and what is going on with the task force? You can't get any more simple than that question. So what is this government hiding that is going on with the task force?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're really proud of the work that is happening and the fact that we're making huge inroads right across this country instead of bringing up divisive policies that we see the members opposite are going to be discussing. Let's talk about the Conservative opposition and the things they'll be discussing this weekend. Let's take a look, shall we? Transphobia, homophobia, climate change denial, antichoice, health care privatization. We care about pipelines. We also care about the other issues that Albertans care about, and we're not afraid to discuss them in this House.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, what is this government hiding? This is a simple question. We don't need to hear the NDP's campaign talking points. There's time. I know that they're campaigning to be in opposition. They show that over and over. But I'm asking a simple question on behalf of Albertans. When is the last time that the task force met, and what did they discuss? What has the task force accomplished so far? Why won't the Energy minister stand up? Why are we seeing this partisan rhetoric? What is going on?

Ms Hoffman: We're really proud of the fact that our Energy minister is meeting with stakeholders from across this country to continue to build allies and get our pipeline to tidewater, Mr. Speaker. This has been her track record, and she is making huge

progress. That's why we have significant support. And she won't stop. She'll keep meeting with that task force. She'll keep meeting with energy leaders. She'll keep meeting with indigenous leaders.

We are certainly looking forward to finding out what's behind the curtain of the members on the opposite side because they won't stand in this House, but they're willing to discuss these issues of division at their convention. Mr. Speaker, it's time that they come clear with Albertans about what their real plans are.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Nixon: Well, let's try another, Minister. The environment minister has clearly been saying that the government has no predetermined plans for the Bighorn area and that the NDP is focused on consulting with the public on this issue. The UCP has obtained a leaked government memo showing that these statements from the minister are not factual. The memo from January 16 contains an actual timeline and plan with the end result being the establishment of the Bighorn wildland provincial park. This shows that a provincial park has been predetermined by the NDP, and any so-called consultation by this government is a sham. Minister, will you come clean with Albertans and tell them the truth?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: You know, when we talk about the Bighorn, we're working in the backcountry on responsible land use. That's been incredible. We've worked with many local groups managing off-highway vehicle trails and monitoring campgrounds. There's also been enormous engagement with all stakeholders and efforts to repair the damage done by those who don't respect this region. You know, Mr. Speaker, this is going to be a good park for everyone because it's got stakeholder input from all sides.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough now, the Energy minister will answer questions for the environment minister, but the Deputy Premier has to answer questions for the Energy minister.

I'm not sure what's going on, but we just heard the Energy minister confirm that, basically, that memo is in fact true, that my constituents and the people of Alberta have been told that there will be proper consultation when it comes to the Bighorn, and this minister just confirmed 100 per cent that it has already been predetermined and Albertans have been misled by this government. What is going on? Is there a consultation, or have you already decided that there's going to be a park, as this memo says?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have been asking Albertans, and there has indeed been consultation to provide feedback on the North Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council's report. This project, Bighorn, or known as the west country, is a good project. It's got support from and input from a number of areas, and we're developing a plan that grows the economy, protects that environment, and enhances important opportunities for hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and off-road vehicle trails, something we all as Albertans enjoy very much.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. This NDP government is not consulting with Albertans. They're consulting with select groups of individuals at invite-only meetings. They're not talking to local politicians, local stakeholders, some of who are in the gallery today. They certainly haven't talked to me, and I've lived in the west country most of my life and know it very, very well. But what this minister has confirmed yet again is that this memo is correct. This has already been predetermined by this government. This government has been misleading the people of my constituency and this province, saying that these consultations that are ongoing right now are real. It turns out, I guess, that they're fake, and the park has already been determined.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will confirm – and I will speak slowly on this. It is not predetermined. We are still seeking public input. The plan is in development, but as we look at things we are seeking input. I invite the hon. member, who claims to be the west country expert, to give his input because we will accept it along with everyone else's.

Coal Phase-out in Parkland County

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government doesn't appear to understand the economic and social impact of shutting down coal-fired electricity generation. Parkland county derives around a quarter of its revenue from taxes paid by the coal industry and will be forced to reduce service levels for the county and their participation in regional partnerships. What is the government doing to better understand the impacts of the policies on the county and people in the county feeling the effects?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are of course working with coal communities. We want to continue to make sure that the workers in those places earn good livings. We're talking to people in the coal counties and their elected representatives. That's why we're ensuring that those workers have the supports they need as we go forward. The transition fund is in place. The community transition fund is in place. There have been a number of consultations. There'll continue to be some.

2:00

Ms McPherson: Parkland county is in a doom loop. They can't attract a larger tax base because they can't invest in infrastructure without the province, and that infrastructure is needed to bring in replacement revenue. The coal phase-out is occurring faster than the government expected, and this catch-22 will only accelerate. The government hasn't responded to the innovative solutions suggested by the county in their December 2017 MOU. How can Parkland county be expected to diversify and sustain its regional economy without an effective partnership with the province?

Mr. Ceci: Of course, partnerships, Mr. Speaker, are important for all orders of government working together. This is critical for Parkland county, as it is for the government of Alberta. It's unfortunate that Parkland county chose not to apply for the coal community transition fund, but we're going to continue to meet with the county. We'll continue to reach out and encourage them to apply for these funds so that they can do the work that the hon. member is identifying that needs to be done. But even if the county

decides not to act, we'll continue to have the backs of the workers in those communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms McPherson: Parkland county already had a transition plan in place, so they refused the money and gave it to other communities that needed it. The coal community transition fund is 4 and a half million dollars to help develop plans to deal with phase-out. This is smart, but the amount is one-tenth of the \$40 million to support worker retraining and 350 times less than the amount paid to coal-fired plant owners. What substantive strategies are coming to demonstrate the government's commitment to transitioning these communities to a sustainable future?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I just need to perhaps step back for a second and say that the Coal Association of Canada believes that the work of this government is in the right direction. It said, "The release of the panel's recommendations and the announcement of the Coal Workforce Transition Fund is a step in the right direction." That was echoed by the mayor of Hanna when he said that these supports will go a long way to help workers and the community. We'll continue to have the backs of those communities.

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

LGBTQ2S-plus Rights

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of this government's record on LGBTQ2S-plus rights. That's why I was so dismayed to hear about some of the policies that will be debated at the founding UCP convention, including resolutions that take away the rights of LGBTQ2S-plus Albertans. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what has this government done to ensure that all Albertans are respected no matter who they are?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to be part of a government that has three openly gay MLAs. It has taken historic steps to create a more inclusive and welcoming province such as amending the Alberta Human Rights Act to include gender identity and expression as well as creating safe and caring schools and shelters for LGBTQ-plus youth. This extreme right-wing rhetoric vilifies people who have fought and won the rights for people to be who they are. It is divisive and promotes hate and discrimination and, quite frankly, is very shameful.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that a couple of the resolutions that will be debated this weekend suggest that the government should, quote, allow parents the ability to have current information on their child's activities if the parents request such information, to the same minister: what is the government's policy on outing LGBTQ2S-plus kids in the school system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, and thank you to the member for the question. The Premier has made it very clear that she will not let the Leader of the Official Opposition or anyone else out gay children, and our government has made that promise come true. I am proud to be part of a government that brought in legislation to make it clear that schools cannot disclose without cause or without consent the identity of a student who joins a GSA. We will not allow the

Leader of the Official Opposition, his party, or anyone else to turn back the clock with a dangerous plan to allow schools to out kids to their parents without consent.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What impact do government policies of inclusion have on our reputation as a province and on business and on tourism?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Businesses and visitors want to work and, of course, vacation in a province that is safe, inclusive, and welcoming, not one that promotes hate, fear, and intolerance. It is disturbing that the electoral success of some political leaders is based on supporting those who spread hate, discrimination, inequality. It is divisive, and it weakens us as a society and as a province. I want to thank the Premier, the MLAs for Calgary-Hawkwood and Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and all of my government colleagues, really, for standing up for the LGBTQ-plus community. I look forward to celebrating pride with them this year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Bighorn Area Land Use

(continued)

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it just seems to me that it's odd that the minister is talking about this report and what's going on with this, but this report that we have says that the government says that in September 2018 they're going to establish the Bighorn wildland provincial park. Now, that sounds like that issue is settled as far as the government is concerned. Also, the minister suggested in estimates that the consultation on the Bighorn was done as part of the North Saskatchewan regional plan, yet it appears that the minister is personally consulting with foreign-funded special-interest groups like Y2Y. Why is the minister consulting with these groups while telling us in estimates that the consultation is "now complete in terms of hearing from the public"?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Albertans deserve strong regional planning that supports economic diversification, protects the environment, and ensures recreational opportunities for future generations. You know, we as Albertans love all those opportunities to enjoy our beautiful province. The North Saskatchewan region is home to Alberta's Industrial Heartland, the capital region, and some of the best farmland in the world along with foothills and mountains. It's also home to prized headwaters that supply drinking water to the cities of Edmonton and surrounding communities such as Red Deer. We are asking all Albertans to provide their feedback. We're still accepting it.

Mr. Loewen: Given that that answer has nothing to do with the government's predetermined decision to establish the Bighorn wildland provincial park and given that the minister also told us in estimates that the consultation process for ordinary Albertans was solely by online survey and given that the minister suggested that the government was not conducting any town halls or public meetings in relation to the Bighorn and given that the minister refused to tell us whether she believed that consultation should focus on affected residents of our province, can the minister clarify now whether she prioritizes input from everyday Albertans or foreign-funded special-interest groups?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say it again: we have not determined what this plan will look like. We are accepting input from everyone. We value all Albertans' opinions. We seek input as I speak, but you're not going to wait for everything. You will start to develop a plan as you get it, and you will tweak things. Again, there is no predetermined plan.

Mr. Loewen: Given that that flies in the face of the facts of this document, produced by the government, to in September 2018 "establish the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park" – that's very clear – and given that the minister has clearly gone above and beyond to cater to special interests while putting in the minimum amount of effort to consult with ordinary Albertans and given the shocking revelation from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre revealing the predetermined outcome of the new wildland park, will the minister commit to going back to the drawing board and conducting an open, transparent process that is focused on Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that it was the previous government who created the RAC, and we released it for input. That is what we're doing right now. It feels like the opposition wants to do nothing that's going to help the health and livelihood of Albertans. We're taking action to protect vital headwaters supplying drinking water to Edmonton and Red Deer. You guys across the way are drumming up a problem that actually, quite frankly, doesn't exist. We're making sure that Albertans have dedicated areas for hiking, camping, fishing, canoeing, and exploring OHV trails.

Market Access Task Force (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what it feels like is that this government continues to audition to be in opposition. Don't worry. They'll be there shortly, I suspect, if they will not answer a simple question. The NDP government has a history of taking verbal action and not actually taking any real action. I have asked this question a few times today, and I want to know this. Are the Market Access Task Force meetings still going on, and when was the last time that task force met? Will the Minister of Energy stand up and answer a question?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The task force is continually in contact with each other, but the last official meeting that's on record, where we met fully, was on April 12. But we continue the work, phone calls and that kind of thing. It's an ongoing process, as it is with our companies, our industry, and many people involved.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you. That wasn't that hard.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP government has a history of saying that they'll take action and then not actually taking concrete action and given that they have a history of declaring victory when there is no victory and given that they announce task forces that are not gaining anything as a result usually, my question to the Energy minister is this. How many times has the task force actually met, what has been accomplished in that time when they met, and when will we see a report of the results?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in this matter of getting pipelines built, especially the TMX, we consult with a number of people. The task force is one, but I was in Calgary yesterday consulting with industry again. This is an effort – as I've said many times, it takes a village to get this pipeline built. It's unfortunate that the opposition spends most of their time trying to sabotage, to be honest, those efforts, and it seems like they don't want to be part of this process. I said yesterday publicly that it's a nonpartisan issue. This is about Alberta, and this is about Canada.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this is the NDP's task force that I'm referring to and given that the minister is on that task force and given that we're now on six questions, simple little task force questions, that the minister either refuses to stand up and answer or can't answer, I'll try again. It's very simple. How many times has the task force actually met, and what was accomplished and discussed during those meetings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposition seems to be trying to create a conspiracy theory here that doesn't exist. There's no story here. The task force is one piece. We have industry, we have experts, we have anybody who can help us get this pipeline to tidewater, and we're going to continue to do that work. I don't know that it's germane to know who we talk to, when, and how. What I did yesterday was that I asked people of all political stripes if they would join us in this as a government to get this pipeline because it's important to Albertans and it's important to all of Canada.

FOIP Requests on Carbon Levy Reports

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this government's carbon tax makes life harder for Albertans and especially those in rural Alberta, making it more expensive to drive for groceries, take their kids to soccer, or even get to work. We asked the government through freedom of information to come clean about, quote, all financial reports related to the carbon tax, and they withheld all of that information. I have a simple question to the government. What are they hiding?

Ms Hoffman: Nothing, Mr. Speaker. If the member from the Official Opposition would like help writing FOIP requests, I'm sure there are a number of folks that used to be employed with his caucus that would be very happy to help him because they have the expertise. I have to tell you that wild fishing expeditions don't get documents. Asking specific questions gets you specific results.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, we asked a specific question, to have all of the information that they had released to us. On eight or 10 occasions – and I'm happy to table the document here in the House – they refused to provide the information because, quote, it was advice to officials. Why is advice to officials okay but not information for Albertans?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reason why there is that clause is because the former government, who you used to campaign against – but now you're sitting side by side with those folks, Member from the Official Opposition. That legislation was written by the former government, and there is a very specific

clause about advice to officials. For example, cabinet briefing documents, that are given to us to make informed decisions, aren't actually released to the public if they have confidential advice that could impact markets or could impact the important decision-making that goes into making this. This is to ensure that government can have the best information without it being feared that it could negatively impact Canadians and Albertans.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that they didn't release this information because they are afraid of Albertans finding it out and given that this government is already under at least four investigations as a result of their secrecy – they hid the carbon tax from voters during the election – and given that now they are continuing to hide financial reports relating to their own tax from Albertans, to the Minister: will you stop hiding this information, release it today, or is it going to take another investigation for you to do the right thing?

Ms Hoffman: Oh, it is very rich to have members of the Official Opposition talk about hiding when I have a feeling that in about an hour we're going to see just that, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I'm not right. I hope that they show up and do their jobs. It seems that they're more comfortable talking about their divisive policies at a closed-door convention in Red Deer than they are in this very Chamber. We follow the legislation. We're happy to comply with freedom of information requests, and if you have a question, you can certainly raise it with the commissioner. But it's pretty rich for you to talk about people hiding when I have a good idea of what's going to be happening in about, oh, 58 minutes now.

The Speaker: Calgary-West.

Educational Delivery Choices

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP government formed, many groups such as the ATA saw an opportunity to lobby the government to withdraw funding that provides Alberta's parents and children with choice in education. Independent and charter schools, alternative programs, home-schools remain concerned to this day that the NDP's friends will convince them to halt their funding. Minister, will you show support for choice in education today by vowing to reject any more of these lobby efforts?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, every couple of months or so I have to reaffirm what we have done for the last three years, which is to fully fund education in all of its combinations and permutations across this province, be it private schools, home-schooling, francophone schools, separate schools, public schools, and so forth. We will continue to do so. In fact, in this last budget we did it again, and – you know what? – the members opposite did not even vote for that budget. They voted against it. They voted against children, they voted against building capital, they voted against the home-school increase, and they voted against the private school increase, the whole kit and caboodle.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that a report indicates that Alberta's system of school choice has saved taxpayers \$750 million over five years and given that although the Premier called the charter and independent schools "havens of elitism" even though in 83 per cent of the independent schools the average household income is slightly below the provincial average, Minister, will you confirm that Alberta's current system of educational choice does not take resources away from public schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former teacher I never refuse the opportunity to do a teachable moment, so this is compare and contrast. Compare this government fully funding education in all of its combinations, including the ones that he described here today, to massive cuts and the members opposite not voting for the Education budget. Compare and contrast. That's also known as irony.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that constituents in Calgary-West fully support an educational system that provides parents with opportunities to enrol their children in schools and programs of their choice and given that these parents and students are looking for assurance that this NDP government will not erode the current inclusive educational funding model, Minister, will you commit today that you will not change the current funding model, that allows choice in education, either now or in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Further to teaching literature, which I enjoyed doing, Chicken Little and the sky falling: those are metaphors, right? This idea that the sky is falling around funding of education is not only false and confusing, but they are spreading and casting aspersions to scare people every so often while I have now built four budgets in which we have fully funded all of our combinations and permutations of education here in the province. We're very proud of that. We're very proud of the investments that we made. We will not waver from our commitment to children, to parents, and to education in all of its forms here in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Support for Students with Special Needs

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education. Parents in my constituency are quite concerned about the level of support available in schools for children with special needs, particularly those who have behaviour challenges. Can the minister please tell us how special-needs students are being supported in our schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. We have been funding classroom conditions for all students, including those with special and complex needs. That's why in Budget 2018 we did increase the funding towards inclusive education. Our current line item on this is \$461 million, which is an increase of \$8.4 million. You know, I do recognize that there's also room for improvement in regard to inclusive education. The best way by which you can move forward on this is to make sure that you have adequate staffing, which we've been moving forward on, because we have fully funded for enrolment here in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What provisions are available to our classroom teachers to help them support their students with special needs?

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you for the question. Further to the end of the last answer, of course, fully funding for enrolment has led to the

hiring of more than 3,600 new teaching and support-work positions here over these last three years. Our government has also invested \$66 million in the regional collaborative service delivery program, and this means more speech pathologists, social workers, nurses, and other front-line staff to meet complex challenges. We need to make sure we support our teachers every step of the way. They are often the first line of contact for families with special needs, and we're there to help them.

2:20

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Children with challenges in more than one area need greater than usual amounts of support. Is it possible to provide the necessary levels of support for these children in the neighbourhood schools, or is it provided in specialized school settings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. I think it's important to move forward on the idea of inclusive education, where students are able to be integrated into the classroom, but you also have to have that choice where students and parents and families can choose special programming in classrooms. We tried to strike a balance on both. I mean, not to say that we are perfect in this regard. I'm taking lots of input from groups and from parents to look for ways by which we can strengthen our inclusive education program and education for special-needs students. You know, in Budget 2018 . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-South East.

Seniors' Housing

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important things we can provide for seniors is the security and safety of a place to call home. Continuing care, home care, supportive living, and long-term care are all part of making sure that our seniors can live their lives with dignity. With an aging population, we need to make sure that there are as many spaces available as possible so that we can offer seniors a choice and not have to turn anyone away, and that means that we need to make sure we're spending efficiently. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: are you confident that your government is getting the maximum value for money in constructing new seniors' housing?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I'm going to start with this one because it was actually about health care facilities that often do serve seniors, but I'm sure that the minister of seniors would be happy to answer questions about lodges and other items that are actually within the minister of seniors' budget.

In terms of long-term care and supportive living, including dementia care spaces, Mr. Speaker, I'm incredibly proud of the fact that our government, when given a choice between deep cuts that were being proposed by the opposition, including the then government that that member was a part of, instead of moving forward with those deep cuts – a billion dollars to health care, bringing in a health care levy – we stood with seniors. We kept their rates affordable. We made sure that we increased the number of spaces. We've built 2,000.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Given that the partnership with nonprofits and faith-based organizations meant that in 2014-15, when we were the government, we were able to build spaces at an average of \$65,000 a bed, all meeting or exceeding the provincial building standard, and given that the two most recent government projects, in Calgary and Fort McMurray, were built at rates of \$655,000 and \$764,000 a bed, over 10 times the cost per bed, to the same minister: why did the government not pursue partnerships with nonprofits when it's been shown that these partnerships could allow you to deliver 10 times as many spaces at the same cost?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are making life better and more affordable for seniors in Alberta. Our government has invested more than \$3 billion in seniors' programs this past year alone. We are building 4,100 affordable housing homes through our \$1.2 billion investment. We have over 60 projects on the go. Seniors in our province are well cared for by this government.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the CEO of the Alberta Continuing Care Association has specifically pointed to partnerships between government, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and private providers as being the most effective way to address the increasing need for assisted living spaces, it would seem that this government is more committed to making an ideological point than providing the best possible care for Albertans. To the same minister: in developing any long-term strategy to address seniors' housing, will you put aside the ideology and include nonprofits, faith groups, and private providers as equal partners?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our ministry partners with private developers when appropriate for construction and design services, creating good jobs right here in Alberta, and we'll make sure that these facilities are used for the purpose they were intended for. As for affordable housing for Albertans with low income, the previous Conservative government gave millions to private developers who operated under short-term agreements. We're making sure that affordable housing will support seniors for years and years.

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

Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday an article published in the *Globe and Mail* painted a grim picture for our energy sector. The Suncor CEO said, "We don't see major investment in the Canadian oil sands until we see an improvement in the competitive position of the industry." This doesn't just hurt our oil and gas industry. I was just informed that Lafarge Canada will be shutting down its ready-mix concrete operations in Bonnyville and Cold Lake due to the lack of economic viability under this NDP government. Can the minister responsible please tell Albertans how the government plans on solving the economic competitiveness problem they have created?

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we'll look into the situation that's been identified here just now. But I can tell you that our government is working across this province to support good jobs and create a more diverse economy. Certainly, cement and other things like that are part of a diverse economy. I know there is a cost to those manufacturers, and we as a government believe that more needs to be done. We'll be looking into that as a result of hearing this information.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Lafarge's operations have been shut down by the market conditions fostered by this NDP government and given that the company has said that they do not expect a change in the foreseeable future and given that this particular decision means that 15 families in Bonnyville-Cold Lake will be directly impacted by the closure, is the minister aware of the closure, what plan does the government have for these newly out-of-work Albertans, and will the minister commit to engaging with Lafarge to address the further barriers that they have implemented on this industry?

Mr. Ceci: I think I just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that I just heard about the closure, so, yes, I am aware of it. We will be, through our officials, reaching out and finding out more.

But it's not the NDP government, Mr. Speaker; it's not the government at all that has done this. It is a result of, probably, market conditions that make it somewhat unaffordable for their product to meet the specs of other companies that are selling the same product. We're going to be looking into it, as I said.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our job creators are having their viability eroded by high taxes, high regulation, and antigrowth policies of this NDP government and given that these policies have a real impact on Alberta families all across the province, will the government commit to repealing its harmful policies such as the job-killing carbon tax, the 20 per cent business tax increase, and the numerous policies contributing to the increased cost in electricity?

Mr. Ceci: No, Mr. Speaker. What we will do is that we will continue to work with Albertans and companies. For instance, in 2017 90,000 full-time jobs returned to this province. Eight thousand were created last month. We know things like the GDP, which is 4.9 per cent, not 4.5 per cent, as we have been saying many, many times. StatsCan said that it's a 4.9 per cent growth. We're going to lead the nation in GDP growth again. Those are the kinds of things that will put people back to work, and companies will flourish.

The Speaker: Drayton Valley-Devon.

Educational Curriculum Review Working Groups

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've asked a number of times for the list of organizations, not individuals, who have presented to the curriculum rewrite working groups. Each and every time the minister has refused to provide that list. Now, through a freedom of information request, we have a list of which groups presented on January 12 and 13, 2016. Minister, will you provide a list of all external groups which have presented to the committee working groups, or is FOIP the only way you disseminate information?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're very proud of the curriculum process that we are engaged in in all grade levels and in six subject areas. In fact, they're building the K to 4 component of that right now and working through a process to have approval for the end of the year. Certainly, you know, I've said many times that we've had financial institutions, that we had military history groups presenting. We had the agriculture sector, the forestry sector. It's a process like we've never seen before in regard to transparency and engagement of citizens and our economy and Albertans in general.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Smith: FOIP it is.

Mr. Speaker, given that I have heard that for the first time ever members of at least some curriculum working groups have been required to sign nondisclosure agreements and given that I asked the Minister of Education about this during estimates and he noted that he would follow up, I would like to now give him the opportunity to do so. Minister, is this the first time ever that nondisclosure agreements have been required for working group members, and did all working group members across Alberta have to sign nondisclosure agreements?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, during our most amicable budget review that we had a couple of weeks ago, I did say that we would provide that information in its entirety to the member, and we certainly will honour our word and do so.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that parents need to have confidence that all parties involved in the curriculum rewrite are fully committed to transparency and given that the ATA executive council believes that information reported by the press regarding aggregate test scores needs to be controlled by the Minister of Education and given that the minister will not release the list of presenting groups and is requiring at least some working group members to sign nondisclosure agreements so that he can control the information released on the curriculum rewrite, again to the minister: is this the level of openness and transparency Alberta parents should continue to expect in the curriculum rewrite process?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, you know, the hon. member is a little confused, which is okay, in regard to the individuals that are in the working groups. As I said before, I will give the information – I won't stand in the way of the law – in regard to individual people, right? But I certainly will stand to protect those individual people, too, because I know that there's been a systematic way by which people are trying to spread conspiracy theories around the curriculum. There is nothing further from the truth. All of the groups that are working and have presented to us: we are very happy to – the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and myself were with a great group the other day.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Rural Infrastructure Project Approval

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, rural municipalities have expressed serious concerns related to months of unnecessarily delayed inspections and approvals from Alberta Environment that are involved in road construction, general repair, and maintenance projects. These outstanding inspections and approvals are directly caused by a failed process that was implemented by the ministry in July of '15, which results in enormously long delays for even the most routine, low-maintenance activities. To the minister: why were these new inspection and approval procedures implemented without a capable system of process and manpower?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for raising this matter. I appreciate the concern that has been identified and would be happy to follow up with the hon. member. We'll certainly work to get back to him with the appropriate information to support a thorough understanding of the issue.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that for decades municipalities accomplished proper, routine, yearly maintenance of bridges, culverts, and roads without delay and given that the new system is now so clogged that the response to municipalities is a canned one stating that they're experiencing high volumes of applications and that the timeline for decisions is eight to 12 months and given that these inspections and approvals and maintenance can only be done in the warm season and therefore a complete construction season is lost again, Minister, what actions are you going to take to remedy this clogged system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transportation I'll try and help the hon. member with the question. I will have to get back to him after consultation with the Minister of Environment and Parks on this matter, but I can say that our government believes very strongly that transportation in rural Alberta is very important, and we've been doing a number of things in the Transportation department to support rural municipalities in terms of replacing culverts, roads, bridges, all of the things that they need for the infrastructure that they need. In terms of Environment's process for approvals we'll have to get back to the hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta municipalities facilitate growth and economic development that require attention to public safety requiring timely construction activity involving minor bridge, culvert, and road maintenance plus other routine municipal projects and given that the rural municipalities association passed a resolution to urge the province to relax the unnecessary, overreaching requirements for formal approvals on routine maintenance projects, which the department claims to be attempting to address, to the minister again: will these improvements to the development of less burdensome wetland codes of practice for low-impact activities . . .

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I certainly do appreciate the point the hon. member is making, that it is important that we be able to proceed with our infrastructure projects, whether in rural Alberta or urban Alberta – it doesn't matter – in a timely fashion. But we also have a responsibility to

provide adequate protection for our environment, which is the task of the Department of Environment and Parks. I will undertake to take his questions up with the Minister of Environment and Parks, and I'm sure she will respond to him in good time.

Thank you.

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

Traffic Congestion in South Edmonton

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The population of southwest Edmonton is burgeoning and is very grateful to the government for opening a lot of schools and announcing a new hospital in Heritage Valley. Transportation facilities, though, are taxed, and this has resulted in severe congestion on our arterial roadways and leads to excessive greenhouse gas emissions, among other things. To the Minister of Transportation: can you provide the House an update on plans to increase the capacity of the Henday-Terwillegar-Whitemud corridor, particularly at the interchanges?

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, portions of the Anthony Henday from Calgary Trail to Terwillegar Drive, I know, are a source of great frustration to commuters in south and southwest Edmonton. We are committed to doing what's necessary to deal with these problems and to help people get to their jobs, to their appointments, and to family and friends as expeditiously as possible. I can tell the hon. member that we are going to be moving on that, and he should stay tuned.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure it's in the fullness of time.

Given that the city of Edmonton is reviewing options to facilitate movement of traffic from as far south as the Edmonton International Airport to the University of Alberta campus and to downtown through the HTW corridor, what role can the province play in helping get this long-planned improvement moving forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for his question. We are aware of the future planning by the city. I mean, we always do our level best to stay aware of the transportation needs of all our municipalities, whether they're urban or rural. We know the city is doing preliminary consultations in order to develop options for upgrading the drive to full freeway status, beginning with the construction of an interchange at 40th Avenue, but we haven't received any specific requests yet from the city for provincial involvement, which we will of course consider carefully when we receive it.

Dr. Turner: Thank you again, Minister.

Given that LRT, bus rapid transit, and active transport alternatives are favoured modes of many residents in my riding and across Alberta, is there a role for GreenTRIP funding in providing this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No. The GreenTRIP program is fully expended, but there is provincial transit funding available. Budget 2018 invests \$1.5 billion over five years in grants to municipalities for transit projects, including \$855 million for Edmonton and Calgary LRT projects. Our government is committed to expand that over the next 10 years to help both

cities with their LRT networks. We are doing what's necessary to reduce congestion and to reduce emissions and to make traffic . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Rimbey Area Fatal Highway Crash

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, on December 13 two lives tragically ended as a result of an automobile accident 45 kilometres west of Rimbey, Alberta, a case where someone shot through a four-foot stop sign at a T-intersection going 96 kilometres per hour, resulting in the least offensive charge of careless driving being levied. The family has told me – and so many things have gone wrong with the case – that they just want to get answers. Minister, the family would like to know: why was there only a charge of careless driving rather than dangerous driving causing death or criminal negligence?

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to offer my condolences to the families of the two victims who died in this tragic accident, and I want to thank the member on behalf of the Justice minister for bringing this matter to our attention. The police and the Crown lay charges based on the evidence at hand, but I can share with the House that the head of the Crown prosecution service reached out to the family last night, and a local Crown handling the case will be following up with more details today.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you. I'm glad they're reaching out.

Given that the mother of one of the victims had called the RCMP to find out what was happening with the case only to find out that the case could have been heard this Friday and given that only then was she told, "Oh, by the way, you can fill out a victim impact statement," critical information they wouldn't have known if they didn't make the call in the first place, Minister, will you commit to a full review of victims' services so that no one else falls through the cracks when something serious like this happens again?

2:40

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I can further share that RCMP victims' services reached out to the family yesterday evening to answer questions and walk them through the court process. We will continue working with the family. I will also thank the member for bringing this concern to our government. We will make sure that somebody is going to be following up on this matter.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, before you begin, help me understand and the House understand: is this matter before the courts now?

Mr. Taylor: It will be going perhaps on Friday, so not yet.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe that question is not in order under the sub judice principle; therefore, I will not allow the supplemental.

Mr. Taylor: Okay.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 17

Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, being the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

As you know, Alberta's tax statutes are reviewed annually, and amendments are made to (a) protect the integrity of our tax system; secondly, to implement government policy decisions; and thirdly, to ensure our tax legislation remains aligned with the federal tax legislation.

The proposed amendments will change two acts, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act and the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. These amendments are largely administrative in nature and would first align provincial legislation with current administrative practices; secondly, repeal expired provincial provisions; and thirdly, maintain consistency between federal and provincial legislation. Again, these types of changes are important for maintaining the integrity of our tax system in Alberta and keeping our legislation up to date.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 17.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the memo that I referred to in my question, that clearly shows that the NDP have already predetermined that there will be a park in the Bighorn and, in fact, have even predetermined the date, that there has been no true consultation with the people of my constituency, and that the NDP, in fact, are misleading them as to that fact.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an editorial out of the *Edmonton Journal* called Press Must Remain Free, in which it states, "Disagreeing with standardized testing is a right in a free society; seeking to dictate press coverage absolutely shouldn't be."

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today, one from a constituent, Erin Dowell, who asks the question: "Can you please explain why the taxpayers of Alberta are subsidizing the daycare for some of the wealthiest families in Alberta?"

The second tabling is the appropriate copies of a petition from the pharmaceutical industry in Alberta asking the Legislature to reinvest at least 50% of any savings anticipated from generic drug cost reductions resulting from the 5-year agreement recently negotiated between the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian [generics] . . . into frontline pharmacy services and programs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table the appropriate number of copies of a FOIP request for a copy of the fairness advisers' report pertaining to RFP: AHS-2016-2199.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon during question period I asked questions with regard to

overland flooding in my riding, in every constituency, and every municipality, including the MD of Taber, the counties of Vulcan and Lethbridge, and the Siksika Nation. Now, I have copies of information that I received from these municipalities. They include written descriptions and pictures as well. I have the appropriate number of copies.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have one tabling this afternoon. I rise to table five copies of a May 2, 2018, memo and attachment to all members regarding committee meeting protocols.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 9

Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

[Debate adjourned May 3]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to rise today to close debate on the second reading of Bill 9, the Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are joined by a number of women's choice advocates seated in the gallery, who've come to watch today's debate and see for themselves who is willing and who is not willing to stand up for Alberta women. On behalf of all members of the Legislature I want to thank these strong, passionate women for their tireless work advocating for women's right to make their own choices and for access to health care free from harassment, intimidation, and violence. Every day when I come to this Chamber, I walk down the fourth floor and look to the east, and I see written high in the sky: "Now that we are persons." This is really about women exercising their own bodily autonomy. Also, I think this is about this Chamber being here to serve all Albertans, including the Alberta women who fought for us to have a voice in this place.

This women's issue is an issue that matters. Of course, we are very willing to talk about other issues, including the work we're doing to ensure that we have our pipelines built to tidewater, the work we're doing to diversify our economy, the action we're taking to support local communities. But this issue is important, too.

By acting on this today, we say to the women who are here today and to other women that we hear you, we support you, and we know how important this bill is. We know how difficult it can be for Alberta women to access health care safely. They know how difficult it's been for far too many care providers to safely provide that care without being harassed, being forced to go to court, or being judged and treated terribly for the work that they do for our community. Madam Speaker, it's unacceptable to me that these women have to face this across our province. That's why our government is standing today with women, and more importantly that's why we are taking action.

Before I talk about how this bill would protect women accessing health care, I'd like to add some clarification to some points that were raised in second reading. I mentioned that the injunction doesn't apply to public property. Just to be clear, both the injunction and the access zone include pieces of public property as specified in the injunction. I gave an example of a woman who was not able

to access the clinic via the sidewalk. With only the injunction in place, the woman was forced to walk on the road, through a puddle, to avoid protesters. This, Madam Speaker, is unacceptable. Women should be able to access health care free of harassment, and this is why we have brought forward this legislation.

2:50

I mentioned that legislation will provide a greater space of protection than the injunctions. The access zones extend further than the current injunctions in some directions, and the legislation will provide greater protection for patients and service providers at these clinics. The injunctions will remain in place, but the legislation will add crucial protections for patients to ensure that they aren't bullied, photographed, or recorded without their consent.

Additionally, the legislation prohibits any photographs or recordings from being distributed for the purpose of discouraging a person from accessing or providing abortions on social media. This is something that many women raised with me, that when they walk into their doctor's office and see somebody holding up a cellphone, recording a video, they felt very unsafe. I'm really proud that our government is working to make them feel safe and supporting them in accessing the care that they choose.

I want to be clear that the injunctions are an important tool, and they've been an important enforcement mechanism in the past. However, in practice they haven't always had the desired outcome of protecting women that I imagine the courts intended. That's why we're adding another tool through this bubble-zone legislation. Through legislation, information about penalties is laid out clearly, and they're more easily accessible to the public and to law enforcement. This information can be found online in the public domain rather than having to go into a clinic to get hard copies of the actual injunction. It allows for better communication with protestors on where they're allowed to protest and about what the consequences are and violations should they not follow them. It provides law enforcement with better clarity when enforcing the legislation.

I mentioned that the injunctions have had to be repeatedly amended at the expense and time of the clinics. Clinics' injunctions were implemented in the early 1990s and amended again in the 2000s. When they brought this forward initially to the government of the day, they didn't want to have injunctions. They wanted to have laws similar to those that were put in place in British Columbia, and they were told at that time that, no, it just wasn't something that the government was willing to focus on, that instead they'd have to go to court. Then they went to court again. What were they told just a month ago? They should go to court again. Madam Speaker, that is not fair. That is not justice. These women deserve to be treated fairly under the law, and that's why we brought this bill forward, to make a law to protect these women. In turn, the clinics can focus on their expertise. They can provide their clients with the care that they are seeking. They don't have to spend their resources and their expert time going to court.

Madam Speaker, before I move to close debate on this bill, I'd like to talk about some of the stories that I've heard from women. When I was at the Kensington clinic, they have a journal in one of the rooms, and they walked me through the entire journey for women who are there exercising their right to choose. They walked me through the counselling area, where women are given their full range of options and are given the opportunity to exercise choices in that moment or at a later time around other components that they have questions and concerns about. Then one of the last spaces they have before you go into the operating room: they have a really quiet space with a journal.

A lot of women take the time to pick up that journal and write a few sentences about their experience. Without going into specifics about who these women are, I want you to know that one of the women talked about being married, having two children, finding out she was pregnant for the third time, and trying to be really happy, trying to be excited. She said that no matter how hard she tried, she just couldn't get there. She was feeling sick. She was exhausted. She and her husband hadn't planned on having a third child, and she just felt like she couldn't catch her breath. She said that sitting in this clinic after having an opportunity to talk to the counsellor was the first time she felt like she had some control back in her life.

Another woman talked about being a new Canadian and how, in the country that she used to live in, this wouldn't have even been an option, for her to have a legal abortion – she would have had to consider breaking the law to exercise her own bodily autonomy – and how instead she was treated with respect and compassion by the people inside the building, who were giving her the support she needed to make this choice in a way that was going to be safe, that was going to be supported, and that was going to honour who she was as a human being.

There were other stories, too, that talked about what the women experienced when they walked into the clinic. It is very real for the women who are walking into these clinics and for the people who love them, when they have brought themselves to this point of deciding to see a doctor and seek medical support for the choice they've made. They talked about hearing the protestors outside yelling at them when they were in the waiting room.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, that this bill is sorely needed by these women who've asked us to do this, who've asked governments repeatedly to do this. The women of Alberta deserve no less protection, respect, or dignity than the women of British Columbia or Newfoundland and Labrador or Ontario or Quebec. Alberta women deserve the same respect, dignity, and protection that women in other jurisdictions have.

Again, Madam Speaker, before I close, I want to thank the members of this Assembly who have chosen to participate in this important debate. I want to thank the members on this side of the Chamber and some members on the other side for standing with Alberta women.

To the members who chose not to speak for these women, for the health care providers, I'd like to remind you that the protections that you have in this place to do your job every day, including a Speaker and including a Sergeant-at-Arms – we're not even asking for there to be a Sergeant-at-Arms accompanying these staff members while they walk in to do their jobs. We're asking for them to have some safety, some protection, and some dignity. Here in the Legislature we're protected, so I find it pretty rich to see some members afraid to come into this Chamber to debate this bill and protect women and front-line health care workers. I find it pretty offensive to hear some members saying that these women and workers should go to court just to feel safe when they're doing their job or accessing health care.

If 90 per cent of success is about showing up, well, then I think Alberta women are going to have a grade to give to the Official Opposition because, Madam Speaker, Alberta women deserve a hundred per cent support in this Legislature. They don't deserve to be ignored by their MLAs who hide when it's time to protect them, they don't deserve an opposition that courts the support of groups who would defund their health care and their rights, and they don't deserve to be called a distraction. They deserve respect, and that's what they are getting from this government.

I've mentioned that I've heard from a lot of women about the difference that this will make in their lives. That's who this bill is

about. This isn't about the Leader of the Official Opposition. This isn't about freedom of speech. This is about freedom from intimidation tactics that rely on shame, stigmatization, and that prevent Alberta women from exercising choices about their health care. While the members opposite sit with their Conservative leader or stand elsewhere with him perhaps, women across this province have said: enough is enough. Madam Speaker, enough is enough.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Fildebrandt

Totals: For – 42 Against – 1

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

[Adjourned debate May 2: Mrs. Aheer]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

An Hon. Member: He's found his voice today.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members.

We will now continue with debate. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for sharing some decorum in this House.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the second reading of Bill 13. At the end of the day the reason we are here today, this legislation, Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, is in front of us because the government is rapidly and, some would argue, irresponsibly phasing out reliable, cost-effective coal-fired electricity generation, the baseload we just and we must need to allow for an orderly transition and a new energy balance, and pushing forward with renewable power generation with no regard for the reliability of our electricity system. I call this a disorderly

transition doomed to failure on the shoulders and backs of hard-working Albertans.

Now, Madam Speaker, in order to attract the necessary investment to replace the baseload which has been lost from the ever-reliable coal-fired electricity generation facilities and those towns which provide it to us, this government will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market. It seems like the fallout from the accelerated coal phase-out just keeps coming back again and again and again into this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, let's backtrack a little and look what brought us to this bemusing point in the first place. As much as this government likes to point fingers and say that it was actually the Harper government that phased out coal-fired electricity and are the ones to blame for this mess, that just is not true. Yes, the federal government, in their efforts to address emission reduction targets, implemented a plan which phased out 12 coal-fired electricity-generating plants. Twelve. These 12 plants were scheduled to be phased out by 2029 as per the federal agreement brought forward at the time. This was in line with the life cycle of these facilities as their end of life was estimated at 50 years.

However, Madam Speaker, the NDP took this a step further and included six newer plants in Alberta into a 2030 timeline, and I'll list them for the benefit of those in the House and those watching. Sheerness 1, Sheerness 2, Genesee 1, Genesee 2, Genesee 3, and Keephills 3 were all scheduled to operate well beyond 2029 under the federal government's agreement. Genesee 3 was supposed to operate all the way until 2055. That's a lot of baseload there. Keephills 3 was supposed to operate until 2061, providing inexpensive and reliable baseload power to Albertans even as we transition into a renewable world.

3:20

Before this government tries to once again shift the blame onto a previous Conservative federal government, as they are extremely fond of doing, just remember that with these two plants this government cut off 56 collective years of stable, reliable, inexpensive electricity generation just to prove a point, a point on the shoulders of hard-working Albertans, that their climate leadership plan would earn us social licence. How is that working for us, Madam Speaker? And for what? For social licence that has yet to matter to anyone opposing our energy industry and the environmental lobby, foreign-funded enviroactivists, no less, who settle for nothing less than the complete decimation of the industry, which has played such a pivotal role in building Alberta and, more recently, Canada into what it is today through the generation of wealth and jobs, transfer payments, funding of health, education, and creating prosperity not just for this province but for this country.

Not only is this phase-out an ideological decision, Madam Speaker; it is and will continue to be a very, very expensive one for Albertans. It's been estimated that it cost the NDP a paltry \$1.36 billion in compensation just for the asset value loss on the phase-out of these six remaining coal-fired plants. But what is not included is the loss of many, many other sources of revenue: corporate taxes; personal income taxes for those who will look back as previous employees of this industry; royalties on the coal, which I think is about equal on an annual basis to some of the compensation and some of the funding that is going to those – I think two years of royalties is all they're getting to try and transition into a new economy – and, of course, all the other economic multipliers too numerous to quantify, as those funds and those dollars go into the economy and are spent and respend by the people in those towns.

Just think of the decimation of those communities when they lose those jobs, lose that economic activity. I worry for those towns that

are the hosts of those coal-fired electricity-generating plants. Madam Speaker, \$1.36 billion and all the other multipliers and other sources of income and taxes and economic multipliers that I mentioned: that sounds like a lot of schools and roads and hospitals and an incalculable number of teachers, engineers, nurses, and doctors who would work at those facilities were we able to build them with money that we actually have, not with the red ink that this government is so fond of writing their cheques with.

Additionally, the government likes to talk about converting some of the coal-fired plants to natural gas. Great idea. But this is only a stopgap measure for impacted communities as the government kills off their major source of employment and leaves them hanging. I think I mentioned to the Minister of Culture and Tourism that he'll have a great new asset, the ghost towns of Alberta as a new NDP tourist attraction. Ghost towns. Many of us have visited those from a previous generation across this province.

However, we all know that these converted facilities are not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants. A pretty simple concept. Not really what an effective transition should look like, but as I said, they decided disorderly transition, with many unintended consequences, as only this NDP government can be so adept at.

Natural gas plants are much less labour intensive than coal-fired plants, which means, Madam Speaker – guess what? – fewer jobs in those facilities and in those communities. No need for coal mining operations, of course, unless this government just intends to export the problem around the globe. Now, isn't that the height of greenhouse gas hypocrisy?

Which brings me to one of my next major problems with this legislation, Madam Speaker, and this government's overall approach to the electricity system. The NDP through their bungled electricity strategy have made life more expensive for families and businesses in Alberta. Not only is that burden going to be on the shoulders of our families and struggling families, in many cases unemployed families – I think the number was 152,600 unemployed in Alberta and the families that they represent – but also the businesses that we try and attract by being competitive, by attracting businesses and investment to this province. That stable baseload of electricity power is highly important to that competitiveness, Madam Speaker.

To make things even worse for consumers, this legislation only adds to the problem by transferring more risk away from generators with the smoke and mirrors for consumers and cap rate schemes, but at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, there is only one taxpayer. They are the very same person as the consumer. Robbing Peter to pay Peter indeed. A curious and manipulative, ideologically driven arrangement that actually harms Albertans and their ability to put food on their table, to pay those mortgages, those mortgage-paying jobs we always hear about, and then to attract the businesses we need in this province to create the jobs, to take those unemployed Albertans off the unemployment rolls.

As we know, the NDP wants to force renewable electricity on the Alberta market whether anyone has concerns or not. We've heard earlier today about consultation, too little and too late. Unintended consequences be damned as long as it fits the ideological narrative, divorced from any concept of good old Alberta common sense. We see it time and time again with this government's burdensome policies, regulations, and costly irresponsible actions. More winning ways borrowed from Kathleen Wynne, perhaps. It is their way, their vision through the myopic lens of the NDP world view that is guiding this misguided strategy.

Madam Speaker, any alarms raised by experts, past senior bureaucrats, or this opposition around the stability of the electricity system and the risk to Alberta consumers, a great risk to Alberta

consumers and to taxpayers, are ignored and summarily dismissed. And it's not like the opposition are the only ones saying these things, Madam Speaker. An October 2016 report from the Alberta Electric System Operator, also known as AESO, stated:

Without investment in new firm generation (or equivalent but alternative sources of firm supply such as demand response, etc.) to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

That is very troubling to me, Madam Speaker, and I think it should be to everyone in this House and all Albertans, our electricity expert telling us that we will have a compromised electricity system and compromised reliability for consumers and businesses in this province as we hopefully move back into economic growth, not the up, up, up we hear from the other side but real, true economic growth through the attraction of business and investment.

Despite these warnings the government went ahead with Bill 27 in November of 2016 and set the target for 30 per cent renewable electricity generation. In doing so, the NDP purposely and perhaps purposefully compromised the electrical system's reliability and did so without a guarantee that the natural gas peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when, as we always say, the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow.

Which brings us back to the reason we need this legislation in the first place, the reason it's being brought in front of us. Once this government imploded the system in place, litigated themselves into a corner, and pushed ahead with their misguided agenda, they realized they would need to move to a capacity market to attract any investment at all, the same people that they've been facing lawsuits with and launching lawsuits against, the same people that they now want to have as partners. They've had to go to a capacity market to attract some investment to give the baseload that we all know we need.

Essentially, this government has now given Albertans a choice between high electricity prices with volatility and high risk or higher electricity prices with stability and lower risk. Higher electricity prices, Madam Speaker: does that sound like a story we've heard all too often from Ontario, the pleas from people there who can't afford to pay their electricity bills anymore, their electricity bills higher than their mortgage payments? All this because they tried to force renewables, a disorderly transition into the market, and shut down coal at an unnecessarily rapid pace, which went far above and beyond what the federal government had implemented. No one wants the disaster that is Ontario's electricity system. You win some, you lose some, as some might say. In just a few months maybe that government there and their ideological allies will face the music. Maybe we'll get there one day in this province as well.

3:30

No one wants ratepayers to be paying for power plants that sit idle and don't run, just in case for when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. We know that that's the way it works. We know that we have short days in the winter. We know that the wind is not always blowing at the time when we need the peak-demand power. But, as always, this government is leaving a number of the important details to sketchy regulations and is asking us, so far, to trust them and their judgment. Well, Madam Speaker, that ship sailed \$96 billion ago.

I understand that at the appropriate stages in debate we will likely see some positive suggestions brought forward by some of my hon. colleagues, and I hope that this government is prepared to listen to

these reasonable suggestions, Madam Speaker. This might at least recognize some of the many concerns I'm hearing from Albertans, your constituents and mine. Albertans should not be paying for the reckless decisions of this government, not today, not next year, not for a generation, as seems to be the chosen path and pattern of this government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will not be supporting this bill.

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 Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to stand and speak to second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. This bill is about delivering safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity to Albertans. This bill is also about attracting investment and preparing for a low-carbon future. It's about protecting Albertans from electricity price spikes.

This legislation will modernize Alberta's electricity system, transitioning our energy-only market to a capacity market. The move to a capacity market is highly recommended by current and potential energy investors as well as external experts, consumer groups, and the Alberta Electric System Operator. Madam Speaker, David Erickson, president and CEO of the Alberta Electric System Operator, states:

After thorough analysis, the AESO concluded that the current energy-only market will not ensure that Alberta has a reliable electricity system in the future. There has been a growing reluctance for developers to invest in energy-only markets and this global trend was a critical factor in our recommendation to move to a capacity market.

A capacity market system will make life better for all Albertans. A capacity market will be a benefit for both consumers and investors. A capacity market will provide consumers with a greater price stability as opposed to the volatile price spikes Albertans have endured in the past. A capacity market is a welcome concept for competition, innovation as well as private investment.

This government, on this side of the House, has been working with stakeholders to come up with a state-of-the-art capacity market for Alberta, made in Alberta for Albertans, a system which will ensure certainty and confidence. With predictability and stability comes increased investment certainty. This is a made-in-Alberta approach to a proven system used around the world. Capacity markets are currently serving tens of millions of customers in more than 30 jurisdictions around the world, including the United States and the United Kingdom.

Back in November 2016 our government made an announcement that it would create a capacity market for electricity. The government committed that the new market would be in place in 2021. In order to meet this commitment, changes need to be made to a number of acts and regulations in 2018. If passed, the Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future will lay the groundwork for a more stable electricity system by creating a capacity market, which will increase investor confidence, protect consumers from breaches of service quality and compliance standards, and at the same time provide more options for Albertans to generate their own electricity from renewable or alternative sources. The act encompasses several initiatives, including a transition to a capacity market. This transition means greater price stability for everyday Alberta families as well as more revenue certainty for companies, a win-win for everyone.

Madam Speaker, in 2017 over 2,000 Albertans wrote to the Utilities Consumer Advocate regarding billing issues. Albertans were asking for change, and this act proposes to make those changes. The Alberta Utilities Commission would be able to issue penalties, much like tickets such as speeding tickets or traffic tickets, instead of slow and often expensive hearings. The Alberta Utilities Commission would have the authority to act quickly and resolve issues with service providers.

While most customers experience few problems with retail electricity and natural gas services and bills, those who do experience issues have not always felt properly supported. The Utilities Consumer Advocate continues to receive complaints on inaccurate bills, which shows a need for more efficient enforcement of utility customer service quality standards. If passed, this act would provide for the Alberta Utilities Commission to issue specified penalties to electricity and natural gas providers for particular breaches.

The Alberta Utilities Commission would be able to enforce minor breaches of its rules, orders, and decisions in a timely, efficient, and effective manner, and this measure will help ensure that electricity and natural gas providers are more accountable to Alberta customers, all of which will improve the level of service Albertans receive from their electricity and natural gas service providers. Jim Wachowich from Consumers' Coalition of Alberta stated:

As an independent and residential-focused consumer group, we're encouraged by legislation that's designed to protect Alberta utility consumers. We're pleased to see the government views efficient and effective consumer protection as an important part of the public interest.

The act will address the utility asset disposition. The utility asset disposition refers to who pays for any losses and who profits when a regulated utility asset is either sold, destroyed, or is no longer being used to provide customers with utility service. Madam Speaker, there has been a lack of government policy and legislation on how dispositions of utility assets are to be addressed. A 2006 Supreme Court of Canada decision found that Alberta's legislation did not provide the Alberta Utilities Commission with clear legal authority to allocate gains and losses of disposed assets. As a result, currently the Alberta Utilities Commission is prevented from allocating gains and losses between utility customers and shareholders.

3:40

All financial gains and losses associated with an asset disposition are presently allocated to the utility, which puts an increased risk on the utility, which results in investor uncertainty. The increased risk can result in higher borrowing costs for utilities, which potentially leads to higher utility rates for Alberta customers. Without An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, which clarifies the AUC's authority, legal challenges between utilities and the Alberta Utilities Commission will likely continue. Utility asset dispositions are complex issues which require the Alberta Utilities Commission to have flexibility in making decisions and the ability to take all public interest considerations into account.

Madam Speaker, in the past there have been many lengthy court battles over who pays for losses and who is the recipient of profits when utilities dispose of assets. Industry is asking for clarity. This policy will give the Alberta Utilities Commission the authority to decide, and of course more certainty equals more investor confidence.

Madam Speaker, key outcomes of the utility asset disposition policy include ensuring that customers are not subject to unfair risks and costs, providing a more stable investment climate for utilities, providing regulatory certainty for stakeholders, and avoiding

further litigation on this issue where possible. This policy is consistent with the approaches currently used in other jurisdictions throughout North America that do not have Crown corporations providing utility services, including Ontario, Nova Scotia as well as jurisdictions in the United States.

To enact this policy, proposed amendments would give the Alberta Utilities Commission the authority to make utility asset disposition decisions in the public interest. These decisions can be made – but they would not be limited to this – through consideration of social, economic, and environmental effects and on a case-by-case basis, and the Alberta Utilities Commission is being given authority to develop rules for which considerations it may take into account when deciding the allocation of costs and benefits between utility customers and shareholders.

Madam Speaker, I support Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. We are taking the important steps necessary to secure Alberta's electricity future. Our approach to modernize the system will provide stability for everyday Albertan families and provide certainty for investors. We are making our electricity system more reliable and are better protecting Albertans.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I'll now call on the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you so much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour and a pleasure to speak here today about Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. It used to not be every day that the NDP were trying to recover from legislation they bungled up in the past, but it seems to be becoming more and more frequent recently. This government's destructive policies have caused the need for this bill, and although I am glad to see the government take ownership of their mistakes, it saddens me that we have arrived at this place at all.

We recall from last session when, despite warning, the government brought in bills 27 and 34, which fundamentally changed the way our electricity market operates and introduced instability and unpredictability. Not only that, but electricity prices are simply more expensive for Albertans, and unfortunately we on this side of the House have lost trust in their ability to fix what we've wronged in Alberta's electricity market.

The closing of six coal-fired power plants cost Alberta's hard-working taxpayers \$1.36 billion in order to convert them to natural gas. Not only is the burden being felt by those closest to those power plants who rely on their jobs at the plants in order to pay their bills and take care of their families and save for retirement, but that cost is also being shared by all of Alberta's taxpayers.

This tax season I'm sure we all wondered what our hard-earned dollars were being spent on, who they were benefiting, and if they were being spent in the most efficient way, seeing as the NDP's policies have driven costs up for all Albertans. And that's at the pump, on their bills, and just about everywhere. I'm wondering why all of their policies have simply been making life more expensive for Albertans. In fact, we have so little faith on this side of the aisle that the UCP has written to the Auditor General asking for the full cost accounting of the NDP's whole electricity fiasco. The taxpayers deserve accountability, and as legislators in charge of the welfare of Albertans it is our duty to stay liable to those we represent.

However, that is not what happened when for months and months the communities most closely affected by the government's policies heard nothing at all about what they were in store for or what would

happen to them when the plants that they relied on for their employment and livelihood would close. Families cannot simply uproot their lives and leave their communities, but without a power plant and without employment that community is no longer a viable place for them to live. As part of the federal agreement Alberta was to phase out 12 coal-fired generating plants by 2029, which gave much more time for a reasonable transition, for families to make plans and not have to scramble to figure out what comes next. This was thoughtful and mindful of families, giving them time to transition. Albertans cannot change their entire direction each time the NDP wants to try their hand in another sector just to see what would happen.

Instead, this government would phase out the six remaining coal-fired power plants that would operate past 2029. Some of these coal plants are practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run until 2061, and Genesee 3 was supposed to run until 2055.

Coal conversion to natural gas is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants, but of course the NDP want to force renewable electricity on the Alberta market, and they want to do it fast and with disregard for families who depended on this for their livelihood. Again, the NDP's policies have cost us \$1.36 billion to shut these plants early and convert them to natural gas. There was no consideration of taxpayers, the norm we have come to expect at this point from this government.

The point when the government started disregarding the best interests of Albertans and narrowed their sights on a climate leadership plan, Albertans were the ones left to deal with the aftermath. Now we're seeing them trying to clean up their mistakes on the electricity debacle, a system where they phased out coal-fired power and introduced wind power in much too tight a time frame, causing chaos in the electricity market. As per this government's decision an energy-only market was no longer an option since the \$1,000 per megawatt hour cap on electricity prices would have to rise to \$5,000 a megawatt hour in order to attract the investment it would need to keep the system reliable. Looking to their friends in Premier Wynne's Ontario system, this government knew they could not politically afford Alberta's high power bills being five times higher than they already were.

The Alberta Electric System Operator, the legislation-mandated operator connecting generators with transmission to run the electricity market and keep adequate electricity flowing, ran many models, which included the high use of intermittent renewables to generate electricity in Alberta. Their modelling showed that the renewable electricity program will decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit, thus deterring investment. In fact, they released a report in October 2016 which also stated that "system reliability will be compromised." The NDP had advice and more advice to tell them what would happen, and they still went ahead with their plans.

3:50

The AESO report said:

Without investment in new firm generation (or equivalent but alternative sources of firm supply such as demand response, etc.) to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

They then introduced Bill 27 the next month. This bill set the target for 30 per cent renewables. The NDP was entirely aware that they were compromising the reliability of the electrical system, yet they proceeded anyway. Furthermore, this government did this without a guarantee that the peaker plants would be built to produce

electricity when the sun doesn't shine and when the wind doesn't blow. The foresight is clearly lacking from this government.

This then drove the need for the capacity market, which we're now seeing, which results in medium risk and medium costs, except, of course, the \$1.36 billion associated with shutting down these coal plants early and converting them to natural gas.

However, after this government messed up this file so badly, the electricity stakeholders – the capacity market generators, the AESO, the Market Surveillance Administrator, the investors, and consumer groups – all demanded that this government fix their wrongs and somewhat restabilize the market in the only way left. This government has given Albertans two choices. They can choose either high electricity prices with volatility or higher electricity prices with stability and lower risk, all of this because they tried to force renewables into the market and close coal in too short a time frame, with no forethought.

The capacity market will mean higher power bills for consumers. The government has put in place a 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour cap, and they'll subsidize your power bill should power prices rise above that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. They believe that they're protecting ratepayers because they will be using tax dollars to pay the rest of your power bill. Where do those tax dollars come from? Hmm. Ah, yes. From the same place that this government gets all of its money, from the taxpayer, the exact same person who is defined as the ratepayer.

This government will make it seem as though they will take the burden off, but that money still comes out of Albertans' pockets, and that seems deceitful. This is merely a roundabout way of taking more money from hard-working Albertans in order to protect themselves from suffering the same fate as their friends in Ontario. The ratepayer will not see that cost coming out of their pocket for their power with their bills about the same, but that same taxpayer most definitely will.

Madam Speaker, listing the cost directly on the bill allows for Albertans to transparently see what is going on and to watch for any wrongdoing by the government. However, this government doesn't want ratepayers peeking behind the curtain and will allow taxpayers to subsidize their mistakes.

We also need to recognize that while wind and solar energy are important, they're technologically a long way from being interchangeable in terms of cost, reliability, and capacity with coal or natural gas. Alberta needs a steady basic stream of electricity from baseload combined-cycle natural gas and simple-cycle natural gas in order to begin to replace coal and to provide the backup necessary for renewable forms of energy. Renewables like wind and solar on their own are not reliable enough to be considered as viable options to address the AESO's requirement for a 15 per cent reserve margin. This reserve margin is essential to the electricity market in case demand for electricity spikes. The AESO has determined that wind and solar cannot be used as part of this reserve margin due to how fickle they are. Again, there must be a backup in place if the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining.

Now, I would have thought – and I'm sure many others have thought the same – that this government would learn from their mistakes. After rushing out timelines for the coal phase-out and implementing the renewables margin, which caused the chaos in the first place, they're attempting to simply implement the capacity market in two years as opposed to three to six years. I just continue to lose trust in this government when I see them continuing down this path.

Madam Speaker, this government has bungled this file immensely. They left no other choice but to move to a capacity market. It is unfair that Albertans will be left to pay for their mistakes, however many more shots they'll take at trying to fix

those mistakes. I am deeply disappointed that this government would act so recklessly and with such little forethought, but I'll let all Albertans know that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition will continue to hold this government to account on behalf of them.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. member made mention of Ontario and some of the experience there. I'm just wondering if he would comment on that because I'm a little concerned with the amount of intensity that we see from the opposite side in copying Ontario. We are copying their financial experiences. We seem to be bound to go down the road of copying Ontario's electricity policy, which has made their electricity one of the most expensive in the country. I think they're so obsessed with it, in fact, that I was a little surprised last night to hear the Finance minister make a little slip of the tongue, maybe a telling one, where he welcomed about a thousand businesspeople to a dinner on behalf of the Premier and the province of Ontario. It was a slip of the tongue; I grant that. But why are we so obsessed with the province of Ontario? I just wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, my good man. I really appreciate your question. I have to be honest with you that I find what Ontario did to be extremely complex. You know, the desire to have renewable energy is a great vision, quite honestly. We all want clean air, clean earth, clean water, but there are certain practicalities that don't necessarily correlate with these thoughts. Certainly, our technology still has to catch up for a lot of these things to be viable. But Ontario demonstrated wholeheartedly the rush to try to do that, and the end result was that they are billions of dollars in debt right now, and they're costing the people of Ontario in extremely high tax bills.

We have just discovered very recently that the Auditor General of Ontario has done an audit of Ontario's finances, and they found that they were hiding money, that they were using skulduggery in their accounting to hide a lot of the real costs of this. I hope this government doesn't pick up any of those thoughts and try to do the same thing. I have more faith in our people here, I hope, but again I can't help but wonder if you're heading down that same path. It would be very dreadful if we did.

To answer the good Member for Lacombe-Ponoka's question, I'd have to say that Ontario just did it in the poorest possible way. They tried to really push their ideologies, full of rainbows and unicorns. It just isn't the case. The reality wasn't there. You know, it's disappointing that we're sacrificing our own economic future across this nation for, obviously, great ideals of clean air, clean earth, clean water, but they are currently not sustainable, currently not as achievable as we hoped. That's a shame.

You know how Canada really impacts the world? When our people are working and we're putting our kids to school and we have this highly educated population who doesn't have to worry about putting a roof over their head and putting food in their mouth and are getting a great education. Those are the ones that travel all around the world, those kids. They're the ones that preach our Canadian values to the rest of the world. They're the ones that sew those maple leaves onto their backpacks so that they can proudly say that they're Canadian, and they go volunteer all over the world.

4:00

We spread our values that way, and we demonstrate to the world about all the great things that we have to offer and what we can share with them. If anyone here has travelled, you'll find that the

other nations of this world aren't quite at the level that we are of being socially conscious. I mean, we have a government right now full of social justice warriors, but if you go to any other nation, they are few and far between because they're still struggling with their economies. They're still struggling to ensure that their people are employed. They're still struggling to make sure that people are fed. The world out there is not as clean and as ideal as we hope.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. That is the name of the bill. I would say that it's a very descriptive name, but it really doesn't tell you what the bill involves. Now, that's an important thing to bring up because a lot of times what happens is that when you put a bill forward, in the name of the bill usually you're trying to describe what you're doing. Now, it is my understanding that Bill 13 will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market. That is the goal of the bill. It makes sense that the name of this bill probably should have been An Act to Change Alberta's Electricity Market to a Capacity Market. I think that's a reasonable thing that we should have had as a name for the bill.

Mr. Mason: Is that an amendment?

Mr. Cyr: Well, you know, the House leader has said that he'd be willing to put an amendment through should I do that, and I'm very thankful for his voluntary – now, for me, though, what I have to say is that, to be honest, I don't know what a capacity market is. I would argue that many Albertans don't know what a capacity market is. I also would argue that many Albertans wouldn't know what an energy-only market is. So for me I'd like to take some time today for the record to go through an article. It was written by Adam James. The paper that he did this for is the energy collective. The name of the article is How a Capacity Market Works. It was written on June 14, 2013, so this is not a recent article, but having read through the article, I do believe that I have an understanding of what the author is trying to get through.

Now, I would like to start off with a quote from the article, right off the bat.

I have a confession to make. I am one of those folks who consistently write on wonky energy things without ever taking the time to write out simple explanations of the basic concepts or why they matter.

This piece is a brief description of what electricity capacity markets are and how they work.

Now, you can tell that Mr. James has got to be very much an expert in the field because here I am trying to understand the basic concept, and he's showing that this is something that is simple. Having gone through this article, I can say that if there is an error in my interpretation, I would hope that the government would correct me on this because it's not my intent to misinform Albertans.

What we're talking about is:

Part One: What is a Capacity Market?

There is a difference between energy and capacity, and power plants are compensated for both because both are important to maintaining the electrical system in different ways.

Here is the distinction. A power plant generates electricity that you use in your home – and it needs to be paid for that electricity. This happens in the energy market. In these markets electricity is like any other commodity, bought wholesale and [then] resold to consumers at retail prices.

This is just saying that we have a group of companies or a company that makes electricity. Then what happens is that it sells that to a

market, and then it gets resold to the consumer. That seems to be pretty simple, and I can get onboard with that one.

However, some grid operators are experimenting with capacity markets, or “forward markets,” which direct investment a few years ahead of when electricity needs to be delivered. This is important, since power plants are expensive and take a long time to build; adding [an] additional risk that they may not even be used can obviously discourage investment. Hopefully, these markets create long-term price signals for all resources.

The basic idea is that power plants receive compensation for capacity, or the power that they will provide at some point in the future. The way these markets are run in the PJM territory, there is an auction every year that has a delivery date three years away. This auction is called the Base Residual Auction. Then, there are smaller balancing auctions every year leading up to the delivery date where bidders can buy or sell their commitments. These are called “Incremental Auctions,” and occur just in case a power plant cannot meet its commitment, and needs to purchase replacement capacity from another power plant.

There’s a lot to be unpacked in that one paragraph. I have to say that clearly there’s a lot to just getting the origin of this going.

Now, he moves on.

One quick note here: in these auctions, there is no functional difference between a megawatt of power from a power plant and a megawatt of reduced power from efficiency or demand response. So although I’ve been saying “power plants” to help picture this process, demand-side resources can also bid into the auction.

What I am interpreting this to say is that we have different ways of creating power. We have wind. We have solar. We have coal. We have gas. There are a variety of ways of creating the power. That’s part 1.

Now, part 2 goes on to saying:

How Do Capacity Markets Work?

Every resource bids into the auction at its total cost of operation. Since power plants depreciate over time, this bid can sometimes be [lower] if a plant has been around for a long time. This makes sense, since the capital investments in the plant have been paid off and the total cost of operations is mostly employees and fuel. New plants total cost of operation is higher at first, since it would include the capital costs plus the operational costs.

What it’s saying in this statement is that new plants cost more money. This is not shocking for most people. They go out and buy a new car. Obviously, you’re going to have a payment on that car. Then you’re also going to have the maintenance on that car, the fuel for that car, washing the car. You’re going to have all of these little costs. But if you have an older car, it’s potentially going to cost you less because you no longer have those initial payments for the new car. So what they’re trying to say here is that new plants cost more money to operate. I think everybody can get around that.

4:10

This means that what price a power plant bids into the market can vary quite dramatically. A 30 year old nuclear plant could actually bid in very low and a wind turbine that has zero fuel costs could have a much higher bid.

Again, what we’ve got here is that if suddenly we bring on a wind turbine versus an old coal plant, like what we’ve got here in Alberta, the cost of producing that power could be a lot higher for that wind turbine if it is a new build. If that coal plant is an old build and has had time to depreciate, you’re going to find that it’s actually very low cost to operate. So what happens here is that when those two sources of power are bidding for supplying power, the coal plants will be able to bid at a lot lower cost than the wind turbines or the solar.

Moving on.

So what happens is that the grid operator holds an auction based on projections for what electricity demand will be in three years. When I say “electricity demand,” I actually mean peak demand for that entire year, plus a bit extra as a buffer (called a capacity margin).

What happens is that they actually provide a picture. Unfortunately, this is one thing that I can’t show, but what we’ve got here: if you would picture steps going up to a door and if you think of these steps as bids that need to be able to get into that doorway, which would be that peak demand, the lowest bid on those steps would be the bottom of the stairs. And as the bids increase, the value of what they get at the top will be the bid that all of the steps get for the cost of that power.

Now, I know this is confusing, but let’s go on to this wonderful diagram. What they’ve got here is – this is just an example, and I think this is a well-written example, actually – that they’re saying that 550 megawatts of power is the top threshold of the staircase. That’s what you’re trying to get to. Now, you’ve got a wind turbine that is at \$30 per megawatt. You’ve got another wind turbine at \$50, natural gas at \$100, natural gas at \$110. Then we’ve got something that’s called efficiency – I’m not sure what that is, unfortunately – and that’s sitting at about \$130, and a coal plant at \$150 and another coal plant at \$160.

What happens here is that they all bid into the pool. We start with the low one. We start with the wind turbine, the wind turbine. We go to the gas plant, the gas plant, then the efficiency, and then the coal plant. And then what happens is that you meet that wonderful threshold of 550 megawatts. That last coal plant at \$160 per megawatt would have to, unfortunately, not get its bid. What happens is that everybody below that threshold of 550 megawatts would all be paid at the \$150 level. That’s the capacity market, as the way I understand it.

Now, again, if I am wrong, I would encourage the government to correct me. What I’m trying to do here is understand it for myself, and I’m trying to make sure that when we’re on the record here, I’m always putting forward very clear and concise information to the public.

Now, they go on to say in the same example – and I’ll read it word for word.

Pretend that the grid operator had to meet 550 megawatts of demand. This is absurdly low of course, it’s closer to 170,000 in PJM, but the process is much easier to [understand] with smaller numbers. The grid operator will then hold an auction to try to get the 550 megawatts of demand met at the lowest cost to consumers.

So then every resource bids into the auction in at its total cost of operation. In our hypothetical auction below, I’ve arranged the stack . . .

This is the stack I was talking about.

. . . from lowest to highest cost bids, and drawn a line at the point where . . . [the] capacity has been acquired to meet that demand.

Again, that’s that 550 megawatts.

As you can see here, the cheapest resource . . .

In this example that they gave, as I told you before, it’s \$30.

. . . is one wind turbine bidding in 50 MW of capacity at \$30 per MW. But wait!

They’ve got an exclamation mark because they’re making this sound very exciting.

Just because they bid \$30 per MW, that does not mean that the turbine receives 30 per MW. All it means is that the wind turbine is now committed . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for his remarks. I just had a really quick question for him. I actually have the exact article that he's reading from in front of me right now. Basically, the next paragraph – I'll quote from it here – is:

The other story here is that in capacity markets, lower cost resources can have the effect of suppressing prices for all of the resources since they ensure that demand can be met at a lower cost . . . For a company who owns lower cost resources, it is good. Consumers always benefit from lower prices.

Capacity markets are important. They are the firing line for the electricity system of the future, because they direct and encourage investments in different kinds of assets.

I guess, just to finish his thought, if we're going through the entire article here, does he agree with the article that capacity markets are important and that they're the future of energy markets?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I actually have to say that at this point I am still reviewing the bill, and I am myself trying to get through exactly how this works. I have stated this from the very beginning, so this is not a shock to this House.

What I would like to do, though, is continue reading where I was at here. Now, what we have is:

As you can see here, the cheapest resource is one wind turbine bidding in 50 MW of capacity at \$30 per MW. But wait! Just because they bid in \$30 per MW, that does not mean that the turbine receives 30 per MW. All it means is that the wind turbine is now committed to have 50 MW of power available in 3 years from now. Looking further up the stack, another turbine bids in 50 MW at \$50 per MW. Even higher up the stack, you can see efficiency bid into the auction at \$130 per MW.

That is for a coal plant. The bid is at \$130 per megawatt, and another coal plant bids in at \$150 per megawatt.

So what compensation do they receive? In this example, all of the resources, including the wind turbine at the bottom, receive \$150 per MW. This is called the "clearing price," and it is set by the most expensive unit needed to meet demand. In this case, that is the coal plant.

In this case the diagram shows the coal plant in orange.

This is important to understand the dynamics between . . . [the] resources in the market.

In this example, efficiency actually displaced a coal plant (shown in purple) whose total cost of operation was \$160 per MW. Think about it this way; if efficiency had not bid into the market, then demand would have been 100 MW higher and [the] coal plant would have been called on to meet [the] demand. Then the clearing price would have been \$160 per MW.

Now, I know this is really hard to be able to understand without seeing the diagram, and I'm sorry. As my colleague across the aisle said, it is easy to pull up the article should you decide that you would like to.

4:20

Now, I do understand that we do have a government side that says that this is the best way of selling electricity. Now what we are seeing, though, is a retirement of assets that have low depreciation costs. This is important because that means that they are very efficient right now and very cheap for us to be able to produce power from. When the government decides to retire these assets early, some of them, as we heard from my other colleague, 20, 30 years before the time that they were supposed to – what happens here is that we had capacity bidding at a lot lower rates than they would be if we shut them down early. This is where the capacity market is one that we need to acknowledge that if we had not retired

those coal plants early, what we would be seeing right now would be lower electricity prices for both the energy-only . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Because this article seems so riveting, can you please table it next week?

Mr. Cyr: I can.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Are there any other members that would like to speak? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. As I always like to say when I rise to speak on a bill in this Chamber, it's my honour to be able to be here to speak today to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. As a result of the coal-fired generation phase-out and the push for renewable generation the NDP government have put in jeopardy the reliability of the electrical system in Alberta. In order to attract the necessary investment, in order to replace the baseload lost from coal, and, of course, for future growth, Bill 13 will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market.

Now, in 2016 the government announced the creation of a capacity market. This bill, Bill 13, is not about renewables per se. It's about financing coal-to-gas conversions, new natural gas generation, and backup for renewables. Bill 13 is here to fix the mess-up from the coal phase-out, which made the grid unstable when 30 per cent of renewables under Bill 27 were included to be part of Alberta's daily energy use.

I think my colleague from Calgary-Foothills referred to the process as an attempt to put humpty dumpty back together again. The Alberta Electric System Operator contracts renewables capacity through the bid process. Now, as I understand the capacity market, it is a market that pays companies both for the capacity that they could offer the market even when their facilities are not operating plus the price they receive for the electricity they generate when operational. Interestingly, Albertans pay for capacity now, but that cost is bundled in with their monthly energy costs.

Under the new system, as I stated a moment ago, generators will receive two payments. The first one is a constant, steady payment for capacity to produce electricity, and the second is a separate payment for the electricity that the generator will produce. The minister has stated that changes were necessary to attract investment after the province shifts away from coal-fired power by 2030.

Now, coal-fired power makes up a little over 50 per cent of Alberta's electricity, so in order to offset that decline in the backbone of the electricity in Alberta, the province needs companies to build new generating stations. Those generating stations will also need to consistently produce about 8,000 megawatts of electricity by the same 2030. Of course, over the same period the province is also going to be looking for companies to invest in new renewable energy projects.

Madam Speaker, this whole situation started when this new government initiated a carbon tax and levied it to heavy industrial emitters. At the end of the day, it appears that the target for that tax, in a large part, was coal-fired power plants, that have created a large portion of Alberta's electrical use for some time.

Now, of course, the carbon tax was not something that the government included in their platform when they were running in 2015, so when the tax was levied to these companies that were energy generators using coal power, they opted out of their power

purchase agreements because the contract that these energy-producing companies had with the province stated that they could do just that, opt out of their agreement with the province if any government made those agreements uncompetitive. So that is what they did. Of course, this government put on quite a show about how this was some kind of a backroom deal that was made and how they were going to correct this problem with their own agreements because all of the companies were exercising their right to turn back those contracts.

Now, of course, Alberta was on a timeline to phase out 12 of the coal-fired power plants by 2029 as it was. The federal government had set that goal previously. It was a thoughtful plan. Some of those plants were older and were going to be converted to natural gas or shut down anyway. You know, it seemed like a common-sense plan that the companies and the province agreed with. Then came the change of government and their determination to shut down all coal-fired plants in Alberta way ahead of schedule, all tied, of course, to what Trudeau number two called social licence.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, there were six of Alberta's plants that had actually been scheduled to be shut down much later, as late as 2061. Genesee 3 was to be shut down in 2055. These were considered to be state-of-the-art facilities, so of course there was some turmoil in the industry. As the power generation companies handed their contracts, legally so, back to the Balancing Pool, the whole power generation system was in a bit of a risky position. The cost to the Balancing Pool turned out to be \$70 million a month. Seventy million a month. At the end of the day, the pool lost an astounding \$2 billion. The government poured a lot of money into the Balancing Pool while they tried to come up with a way to stop the bleeding, a lot of money that Albertans are paying for.

On top of the hundreds of millions of dollars that Albertans are forced to pay for their actions, we have several coal communities that were of the understanding, of course, that their coal plants would be operational for some time to come. Many, many Albertans will be forced out of work decades earlier than they had

planned for. Anyway, we've all been sitting here for the last three years, and we have all seen this play out over that time.

I don't think there's any question that the government is going to make electricity more expensive for Albertans, and Albertans know it. The electricity price is already starting to move up, and people are noticing that. I've noticed it myself. How far the price of electricity will go is not known. That is kind of the scary part here. Coal conversion to natural gas for these plants is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants, of course. The conversion of these plants is costing Albertans in the neighbourhood of \$1.36 billion to shut them down early and do a conversion to natural gas. Madam Speaker, this government was bent on forcing renewable energy on the good people of Alberta, and it appears that they were prepared to do that at any cost.

This has concerned the UCP enough that we've written the Auditor General in regard to the NDP's tampering with the electricity system. We asked for his outlook on the full costs and implications of the power purchase agreement losses as well as the province's decision to phase out coal-fired electricity and its cap on electricity rates. Clearly, Madam Speaker, this is something that will affect all Albertans to one degree or another. The position of this independent officer is important.

Now, the Alberta Electric System Operator ran many models in its quest to determine how the change to electricity provision in Alberta would shake out, including the use of intermittent renewables to be part of the electricity generation in this province. It appears that the Alberta Electric System Operator modelling shows something that may have been expected by folks on this side of the House . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday afternoon. Have a good weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

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Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, May 3, 2018

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9 — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 10 — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 12 — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 13 — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

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