



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 7, 2018

Day 25

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
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Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, 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.

Monday, May 7, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let each of us in our own way pray and reflect on the good fortune we have to meet the young people of our province and on our confidence in them being our future leaders.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all participants to sing in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a former MLA, Ken Allred. Mr. Allred is one of the most accomplished land surveyors in the province. Graduating from SAIT in 1961 with a gold executive award, Ken went on to hold a number of prominent positions with the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association, the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors, and the International Federation of Surveyors. Mr. Allred was also an adjunct professor of the University of Alberta from 1984 to 1992. In addition to his professional accomplishments, Mr. Allred was an accomplished politician as well. He served on city council in St. Albert from 1980 to '86 before deciding not to run again. He changed his mind, however, in 1989 and served an additional three terms before retiring in 1998. He returned to politics in 2008, when he was elected as the MLA for St. Albert.

It was during his term of office that Mr. Allred originally attempted to abolish adverse possession, which we will address later today, something he remains passionate about to this day, and he will be staying on for the debate later this afternoon. Mr. Allred was very, very instrumental in my bringing this private member's bill forward. I would now ask that Mr. Allred rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 87 students, representing 65 constituencies, who are here today as participants in the Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program. Offered annually

since 2003, this program strives to further develop the interest in and understanding of our parliamentary system among Alberta youth.

These high school students arrived on Sunday and since then have been participating in a variety of activities. In the last day they've toured the Legislature, explored the grounds, attended inspiring sessions facilitated by community leaders, and they've made friendships and learned about dorm life at MacEwan University. After observing question period today, they will meet with a panel of former MLAs. Tomorrow they'll debate a resolution in this very Chamber, presided over by yourself, Mr. Speaker. During this debate the students will be given a unique perspective on the work done by the members of this Assembly, and following the debate, they will have the opportunity to visit the offices of their MLAs. I would ask that all of our MLA for a Day participants, who are seated in both the members' and public galleries, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: I have a second.

The Speaker: Sure.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a second introduction. I wanted to acknowledge a remarkable young man from my constituency, from the town of Fort Vermilion, Carson Flett. He's here with the MLA for a Day program, but Carson is really outstanding. He has wanted to be in this program since the first day that I met him, years ago, and he's very excited that he finally is old enough to come. Carson's current project is that he's got a petition going to reduce the voting age to 16, so he's very politically engaged, and I know that one day he's going to achieve his goal of being an elected representative. Please give Carson a special warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, lest there be any doubt, I look forward to the debate that the students will be having tomorrow, and lest there be any doubt, I expect that the quality of debate will exceed this Chamber.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today on behalf of my colleague for Stony Plain to introduce to you and through you 37 students from Stony Plain Central school. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Morgan Wilson and Alesha Broadbent, and I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other schools groups, hon. members?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Ashwak Bawa-Morad and her guests, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. Ashwak is an early childhood educator at the Community Options Edmonton Northwest Child Care Centre in my riding of Edmonton-Glenora. I am so proud to share with you and all guests that Ashwak received one of only five awards from the Prime Minister. She received the certificate of excellence in early childhood education. Ashwak has gone above and beyond and has a very special place in the hearts of the children she cares for as well as their families. She's joined by Mason, one of her young students, as well as his mom, Tamara. My

heart is warmed when Mason tells me about his best friend, Ashwak, and how he gets to play and learn from her every day. I ask that Ashwak and her guests please rise and join me and receive the warm welcome of our 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 Elaine Munce with Hospice Calgary and Jennifer Elliott with the Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association. They join us during national Hospice Palliative Care Week. This year's theme is Towards a More Compassionate Canada, Eh? This week encourages Canadians to consider ways that community involvement can support the dying and bereavement process, asking: what makes a compassionate community, and how can compassionate communities support end-of-life care? We are truly fortunate to have organizations like these. Their advocacy and partnership are vital in providing quality end-of-life care for Albertans. I invite both Jennifer and Elaine to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Joel Ward and Elaine Vandale. Joel has been president and CEO of Red Deer College for nine years and is an outstanding champion for RDC. Elaine is the executive director of board and corporate relations and is a member of the president's executive team. She has been working at RDC for over 21 years. I thank my guests for the great work they do at RDC, which I will speak more about later today. I ask my guests to now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

1:40

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm thrilled to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly 29 amazing participants in the 2017-18 Minister's Youth Council plus six staff members. These students have come from all across Alberta, and I'm very honoured to have worked with them during this past year. They have done important work that definitely has positively impacted our government. They've told me about important issues like rural education, mental health, and supports for LGBTQ youth. I'm very humbled to have had these conversations with these students, and it's certainly helped to influence my work and to make me a better minister and MLA. I would ask them now to all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, yesterday our government was proud to give 15-year-old Noah Nicholls a Great Kids award for his work in promoting LGBTQ2-plus rights. After joining a gay-straight alliance at his Calgary high school last year, Noah gained the confidence to start telling his friends, relatives, and finally his parents that he is gay.

At the same time we were celebrating Noah's courage and leadership, delegates at the UCP convention in Red Deer were shamefully voting to double down on outing gay kids who join a GSA, a policy their leader first proposed over a year ago. In fact, they went one step further. UCP delegates overwhelmingly adopted a resolution that would mean kids aren't even allowed to join a GSA unless they have parental consent.

Outing kids is not only extreme; it's downright cruel. As Noah said yesterday: "I can't think of something worse than ... not getting to tell people myself ... It's about when you're ready. It should be up to you." The facts are clear. Gay-straight alliances not only give some of the most vulnerable kids in our schools a place to feel welcome and safe; they also save lives.

That's why I am so proud that our government passed a law to protect every student's right to form a GSA at their school without fear of being outed. The vast majority of Albertans support our law. They understand that in today's Alberta it matters how we treat each other, especially the most vulnerable. But this weekend made it clear that the UCP doesn't stand with moderate Albertans. They stand with insular, extreme special-interest groups who want to take our province backwards on GSAs and so many other issues. On this side of the Legislature we'll keep fighting to ensure that that does not happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Women's Political Participation

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this weekend in Red Deer 2,600 delegates met and listened to an extraordinary speech from former Conservative Party of Canada leader Rona Ambrose. She encouraged strong Conservative women to take the leap into politics and to win. Our caucus is stronger when it truly reflects its members and the people of this great province. Rona knows our party leader well and is confident, as am I, that he supports women and makes decisions based on merit and not on tokenism. Conservative women don't want special treatment. We want an equal opportunity to compete and to succeed. I am proud that our party members just elected hard-working individuals to serve on our executive board. Half of them are women but not because of any quotas. They were the right persons for the job.

It's not surprising, Mr. Speaker, because Conservatives have a strong record of empowering women. Who gave women the right to vote? Conservatives. What party appointed the first woman cabinet minister? The Conservatives. Who appointed the first woman Foreign Affairs minister? Conservatives. Who gave aboriginal women equal rights under the law in this country? Conservatives. Who was the first female Prime Minister? Kim Campbell, also Conservative. The first woman Leader of the Opposition, Deb Grey, a Reform MP, withstood unbelievable sexism and harassment from the so-called progressives in the House of Commons, yet she stood her ground, and she made us proud. We cannot forget about these women, who have paved the way for the rest of us. They were not filling token positions. These women competed for and earned them.

I would like to thank Rona Ambrose and Lauren Harper for their initiative, the She Leads campaign, which will support women running for the United Conservative Party. I look forward to a United Conservative government full of talented and experienced women who work hard and improve this province. We believe in our families, in our communities, and in our principles.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Publicly Funded Health Care

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend, after months of trying to hide, the UCP answered the question about what kind of party they are. They could have decided to be an open tent party, but instead they decided to be a party focused on exclusion and collusion. As the *Edmonton Journal* wrote: “United Conservative Party delegates had one job at their founding convention this weekend – don’t look extreme. They didn’t succeed.”

The UCP are showing Albertans just how elitist, extremist, and reckless they really are. Their votes to attack LGBTQ youth, to give big tax giveaways to millionaires, and to privatize health care tell Albertans everything they need to know about what kind of party they are. Their plan would bring back the bad old days of queue-jumping for their wealthy insiders and donors and cutting health services for people like my dad, a house painter who could not have afforded to pay for health care after falling at work and breaking four ribs and puncturing a lung. Albertans deserve better than the two-tiered, American-style health care they rejected last election, and I can confidently say that they’re getting better from our government.

Mr. Speaker, while the UCP refuse to talk about women’s reproductive health, we’ll stand up for women’s rights in this province. While the UCP advocate for reckless cuts to health care, we’ll keep building the Calgary cancer centre so patients can get the care that they need. While the UCP threaten to fire nurses, doctors, and health care aides, we’ll stand up for Albertans and ensure those same nurses, doctors, and health care aides are there at the side of Albertans when they need them. While the UCP try to give political insiders and campaign donors preferential access to health care, we’re going to stand up for regular Albertan families. We believe in public health care based on need, not the size of your wallet.

Rural Infrastructure Project Approval

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, Alberta municipalities facilitate growth and economic development that always requires attention to public safety, which involves timely construction activity involving routine minor bridge, culvert, and road maintenance. For decades in rural areas municipalities have always accomplished those tasks by incorporating professional engineering standards in their construction processes. However, since July ’15 rural municipalities have noticed a considerable change in the environmental approval process and have expressed serious concerns related to months of unnecessarily delayed inspections and approvals, especially for routine maintenance work. According to several municipal superintendents these project approvals are not forthcoming from Alberta Environment and Parks due to a new Alberta wetland policy that contains overreaching changes to the wetland regulatory requirements. This is causing additional and, in their view, unnecessary assessments being required prior to work being done.

In fact, when initial responses are now received to municipal inquiries regarding delayed project applications, responses from Environment now state in almost all cases that at this time they’re experiencing a high volume of applications, and the expected timeline for review and a decision by the director is currently eight to 12 months from submission of the application, Mr. Speaker, and that includes inquiries for simple, routine projects such as replacing a local road culvert. This is simply not acceptable. Entire construction seasons are being lost because of this red tape policy.

To address this growing concern, the Rural Municipalities association passed a resolution to urge the province to relax these

unnecessary, overreaching requirements for formal approvals on routine maintenance projects, requesting that consideration be given to safety concerns related to delayed environmental approval processing from Alberta Environment and Parks. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Albertans this critical safety problem for the travelling public must be addressed by the minister as soon as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Red Deer College

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m honoured today to rise and speak about Red Deer College. RDC has been very busy the last few years, with three major construction projects under way. The Gary W. Harris Canada games centre, the new residence, and the alternative energy lab are on their way to completion. Of course, the announcement by Premier Notley and Minister Schmidt that RDC is on its way to becoming a degree-granting institution has helped make things even busier.

1:50

As if all of that wasn’t enough, RDC has also been busy with its alternative energy initiative, which promotes environmental stewardship through the application of sustainable and energy efficient technologies. The new alternative energy lab will create opportunities for education and research. This will not only assist industry; it will also provide RDC students with the skills necessary to install, operate, and maintain alternative energy systems. RDC will be installing 3,645 solar panels. This along with a combined heat and power unit and their ongoing conversion of their exterior lighting to LED bulbs will create or conserve over 9,000 megawatt hours per year. This will offset campus electricity usage by an estimated 67 per cent. That, Mr. Speaker, would be the equivalent of the energy required to power 1,300 average Alberta homes or the equivalent of removing 1,100 cars off the road annually.

RDC contributes over \$500 million to our local economy every year as well as educating 7,500 full- and part-time students and employing 1,415 people last year alone. RDC has a proud history of providing a top-notch education to its students. I look forward to it leading the way into a better future for Red Deer and the rest of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, if I might remind the House about using personal names in statements: we avoid that practice.

Oral Question Period

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

Federal Carbon Pricing

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, today the Leader of the Official Opposition is in Ottawa talking to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance about the federal government’s Bill C-74, which would enact a federal carbon tax and devastate Alberta and the oil and gas industry. Our leader is standing up for Alberta and protecting provincial jurisdiction, unlike the NDP, who are just rubber-stamping carbon tax increases while Trudeau stands by and does nothing on Trans Mountain. Premier, when will you realize that your job is to protect Albertans and start standing up to Justin Trudeau rather than just rubber-stamping and doing whatever he tells you to do?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud of our Premier and our government for the role we've taken in ensuring that we get pipeline approvals to tidewater, including the climate leadership plan that got us that very approval. The members opposite never came close. If they want to talk taxes, let's talk taxes. Their members this weekend voted for a \$700 million tax giveaway to the richest among us. The rest of us will pay for ballooning class sizes, longer hospital waits. We stand with everyday Albertans. We know that they stand with their rich friends.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the members across the way want to talk about what was voted on at party conventions. The last time that this party across from me met at a national convention, they voted for the Leap Manifesto, which called for the shutting down of the complete energy industry in our province. But I digress.

This government has already rubber-stamped a carbon tax increase to \$50 to start – there'll be another one 67 per cent beyond that – at the request of Justin Trudeau. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier is: did the NDP receive an analysis from the federal government on the full cost of that \$50 carbon tax before they agreed to it, or did they just rubber-stamp that increase at the request of their close personal ally Justin Trudeau?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're proud to show up and do our jobs on behalf of Albertans, and our government is focused on making life better by supporting our energy industry to get great jobs that create good opportunities for Alberta families. The members opposite are focused on making life worse by denying women access to health care. In fact, they won't even debate the matters in this House. This weekend we saw a little bit about what's behind the curtain. They want to put down women who run for public office. They don't even show up for the job themselves. That's shameful. [interjections]

The Speaker: Let's be calm, folks.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, all we get from the NDP government is rhetoric while the deadline clock continues to tick and the NDP continue to punish Albertans with a ridiculous carbon tax that has absolutely no benefit for this province. They've already increased it to \$50 per tonne and have also increased it yet again by 67 per cent in their latest budget. My question – and I'll ask it again – is: did the NDP receive an analysis from the federal government on the full costs of going to a \$50 carbon tax before they agreed to it, or did they just rubber-stamp it because their close ally Justin Trudeau told them to?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we are incredibly proud of the fact that even though there were two governments that were Conservative, one in this Chamber and one in Ottawa – they kind of looked the same – that failed to get a pipeline to tidewater, this government is not accepting failure as an answer. We know the members opposite keep cheering for that. We made it very clear to the federal government that we will get onboard if and only if we get our product to tidewater. You know what? That's in Alberta's interest. It's in the national interest. We won't back down. It's about time you guys came to the party. We know that you're at other parties doing other things, but on this side of the House we stand up for ordinary Albertans.

Carbon Levy Rate

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we've seen an Environment Canada commissioned report that anticipates the carbon tax rising to \$75 per tonne. That means that gas would go up 18 cents per litre; propane would go up 12 cents per litre; natural gas would go up 15 cents per cubic metre; aviation fuel, 20 cents per litre; diesel fuel up 21 cents per litre; home heating fuel up 24 cents per litre. That begs a question. The NDP government continues to do whatever Justin Trudeau and the federal government tell them to. What is this government's position on a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax? Do you support it? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that report was written when that member's leader was in Ottawa, actually, and when his government received that report. But all of that aside, on this side of the House we're standing up for ordinary Albertans. We take our direction from Albertans. We saw a little bit about what kind of party the members opposite are creating. They had an opportunity to set themselves apart, to be a big tent, to welcome women into that, and they did the opposite this weekend. They brought forward extreme, crazy, risky ideological policies that even some of their own members spoke against. But you know what? On this side of the House – don't worry – we've got the backs of LGBTQ youth, we've got the backs of women, and we've got . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
First supplemental.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if the Deputy Premier is even going to try to answer a question, but I'll try yet again. There's this report that's come from Environment Canada that calls for a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax. This government continues to do whatever the federal government tells them to do over and over, whatever Justin Trudeau tells them to do. My question is this: what is your government's position on a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax? Do you support it? Yes or no? What will you do if the federal government tries to bring it in? Will you do what you did before and just do what they tell you to, or do you have a plan?

Ms Hoffman: Well, our plan, Mr. Speaker, is to get a pipeline to tidewater, to address climate change, to make sure that we have good jobs for this generation and the next generation, sitting in our gallery. Our job is to make sure that we protect youth. We don't want to out gay youth. We don't want to privatize health care. We don't want to cut education funding and attack teachers. We don't want to bring in tax cuts for the richest 1 per cent, which would involve \$700 million in giveaways to the richest among Albertans. On this side of the House we're on the side of everyday Albertans. We will fight for them, and we won't back down.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's carbon tax is one of the most crippling things for everyday Albertans. It's punishing them every day. We hear about it every day, how frustrated they are that this NDP government continues to punish them with their ideological agenda. My question to the Deputy Premier, which she continues to avoid – and that's going to make Albertans very concerned because they always do what Justin Trudeau says – is this: do you support a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax, as is being called for by Environment Canada? Yes or no? If the federal government tries to do this, what will you do about it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we've made our plan very clear. We've mapped it out for many, many years. That's why we're proud of the fact that because we had our plan, which was an Alberta plan, not the Ottawa plan that they keep trying to doom and gloom everybody here with – we had a made-in-Alberta plan – it resulted in pipeline approvals. You know why that's important? Statistics Canada reported 4.9 per cent growth last year, and most of that was due to the oil and gas sector here in Alberta.

But that's not what's got me down, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite think it's okay to out gay students. They think it's okay to attack teachers. They think it's okay to destroy public schools. This side of the House stands up for all those things and all the people of this province, and we welcome you to do the same once in a while.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's budget in 2015 committed to "implement a Wait Time Measurement and Waitlist Management Policy to address long wait times in the health care system." However, as we've seen from a FOIP from Alberta Health Services, in the second quarter of 2017-18 wait times have actually dramatically increased under this NDP government's watch, not the last government's. Will this government explain their terrible performance on this file?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the work that we've done over the last three years to improve access and improve quality of health care. It's tough to undo 44 years of cuts and attacks on the working people of this province in one, but let me tell you about some of the progress we have made. We brought forward the very important Calgary cancer centre. It's well under construction right now, a project that, we know, got jerked around by the members opposite in both parties. With it, we'll add the resources as well to ensure that we have EMS workers. The UCP plan and what they did in this House is to vote against all those investments. On this side of the House we're standing up for improving health care, not just cutting and privatizing to two-tiered like the members opposite.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to see the Deputy Premier say that she's proud of wait times increasing. I find that troubling. Again, this is a question of outcomes, not a question of outcomes under the last government but under this government. Wait times for heart valve surgery have increased by 6.5 weeks under the NDP. Wait times for hernia repairs have increased by 7.3 weeks under the NDP. We are talking about this government's failures on this file, not the last government's. Why is this government allowing these services to decline under their watch?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our 17 stroke treatment centres are the best in Canada. That's helped us reduce wait times in that area. In terms of hip fracture repair, knee replacement, and radiation therapy we're among the best in the country. That's not good enough. We want to go further, and we want to improve in other areas as well. You know what won't improve it? Massive cuts and privatization so that only the rich –

the \$700 million that they get back in big tax giveaways by the leader opposite go toward them being able to queue-jump. We don't believe that's right. We believe every Albertan deserves access to quality public health care.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, in the founding document of our party, a document I was proud to help write, it says that "universal access to high quality, publicly-funded health care" is a main cornerstone of our party. While the minister continues to dodge the question, my question is: why are wait times going up under her watch? Wait times for interventions on stomachs have increased by 12 weeks, wait times for interventions on lymph nodes have increased by four weeks, and on and on and on under this government's watch, not the last government's. You have failed on this file. This is your responsibility, so why, Minister, have you failed on this file? Why do you continue to let these services decline?

Ms Hoffman: Well, let me be clear that services aren't declining. We're actually providing more services. What has changed is that the needs continue to grow in the community. Mr. Speaker, while we keep funding and supporting front-line health care, the members opposite are calling for deep cuts. You know what? We can't catch up on 44 years of mismanagement – we're doing our darndest – but the areas that we have been focusing very clear attention on we've made good progress on. We're going to keep doing that, and they're going to keep calling for 20 per cent cuts and voting against the very budget that provides these increased resources to hospitals in their own communities. Man, I'm sure glad for the communities in the rural parts of the province that they don't have these guys running the show because we know what would happen to their hospitals with 20 per cent cuts.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-South East.

Energy Industry Competitiveness

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February this year we heard from the chief executive of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers that the energy sector was looking at moving more of their investments away from Canada and into the United States. Recent fiscal updates from energy companies are showing that his concerns were very valid. One concern is that the ballooning regulatory review of timelines is making it almost impossible to properly set project timelines. To the Minister of Energy: will you commit to reviewing regulations for energy project approvals to stop the loss of investment into the United States?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government absolutely understands that timely and effective regulatory processes are important to our sector. That's why we're working with the Alberta Energy Regulator on ways to improve the process, and we're doing that with industry to help us pinpoint where we should be looking, making it shorter without sacrificing effectiveness. Specifically, we're working with the AER to ensure proponents have a simplified process that includes one application, one review, and one decision because they deserve a streamlined application system.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we support the government in their bid to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built, there are concerns that we might sacrifice long-term regulatory certainty in order to gain approval for the project. Companies rely on stability and predictability when investing billions of dollars needed for their large energy projects. Given the promises of legislation from provinces and the federal government both for and against energy development, many companies now lack any long-term certainty. To the same minister: what is your government doing to make sure future energy projects don't need to rely on an extraordinary act of government to get the project built?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as members know, the AER is an arm's-length regulator that certainly works with each project. Some of the projects are very, very complex and do take a lot of time, but they're working very quickly to get one-stop shopping for smaller projects that will be a matter of days, even as little as five business days. One of the biggest things that helps with competitiveness is pipelines, and we're working very hard on that as well, pipelines to tidewater.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United States used to be our best energy customer, but now they are our biggest competitor. Their growth has been fueled by a competitive tax regime and a regulatory process that offers more certainty around timelines. While we don't need to copy exactly what the United States is doing, we do need to look at how we can make Alberta more attractive to investors. To the same minister: beyond a single pipeline or project what are your plans for growing our energy industry and allowing them to compete with the U.S. on a level playing field?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, we are working on the pipelines. We know that that's the number one advantage to our industry. Currently we're leaving \$40 million a day on the table, not just in Alberta but across Canada. That's money that could be used for all the good things that we want to see in our province and indeed in Canada. As I mentioned, we're working with the Energy Regulator on things we can change within Alberta, and we're also representing Alberta's interests to the federal government when they talk about changes that they want to make to the NEB. On this side of the House I can assure you that we are absolutely supporting the energy sector.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

School Design and Construction in North Calgary

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In mid-March the second annual north-central high school rally was held on the site reserved for a future CBE high school in Calgary-Northern Hills. At the rally residents made it clear that it was our turn. Budget 2018 and subsequent school funding announcements contained good news. To the Minister of Education. Residents of Calgary-Northern Hills are excited that the north Calgary high school received design funding in Budget 2018 but want to know: what exactly is design funding?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Design funding is money provided to ensure that a school board can start drawing blueprints and could make exact plans to make the school come to life. This process takes up to about a year. For example, last year we announced design funding for an elementary school in Lethbridge, and lo and behold it was a fully funded project in Budget 2018. It's a great indication of a school being built in that particular area. I thank you for your advocacy.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a constituency where census data tells us that 20,000 residents are under the age of 18, school spaces are top of mind. Given that many attending the recent rally had advocated for over a decade for the high school to be built, what are the next steps in the process to ensure that design funding is delivered, and what should residents expect to see?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we can see that there's a fast-growing population in the elementary and junior high, so it's inevitable and necessary to build this high school. It takes between 38 to 48 months to go through the entire process, but the process has started now, drawing the blueprints, getting a design that is not just functional but is meeting the needs of students. It will be a wonderful, positive addition to the neighbourhood and is all part of what we're planning to do with this project.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, having attended the school funding announcements in spring 2017, it was good to hear that an elementary school was approved for Coventry Hills, providing a designated school closer to home for hundreds of the community's five- to nine-year-olds. In addition, this new school eases capacity pressures on other schools in the area. Given the school's importance to the community, to the Minister of Education: is there an update on the construction progress of the new elementary school?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Coventry Hills elementary school is in its design phase right now and will go to tender, and construction will start straightaway after that. We know how desperately we do need these schools across the province. We're in the midst of the biggest infrastructure build in the history of the province. As an indication of the sense of optimism and hope for the future, people are settling down, having kids. We're building schools to meet that need, to make life better for Albertan families.

Thanks.

Parents' Rights

Mr. Fildebrandt: Those of us who are moms and dads know that we love and want to protect our children more than any government bureaucracy ever could. Children have fundamental rights and freedoms, but we recognize that until they're adults, parents are the ultimate authority over children. Government is not. I believe that government should only take away that authority in very specific cases like abuse or neglect, but this government has on occasion gone much further, like social engineering. Who does this

government believe is the ultimate authority over our children, government or parents?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we work closely with parents every step of the way to ensure a strong education. It's absolutely necessary. That contract between providing education through our government and the relationship with parents is absolutely paramount and foundational to everything that we do.

Do you know what else is foundational? It is to make sure that you actually put some funds into running those schools. By making 20 per cent cuts to schools, not building schools over the last 10 years or more, you know, we've seen that contract being broken. It's been put back in place with this government.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fildebrandt: As the ultimate authority over children parents have the fundamental right to know what their children are being taught and are facing medically. There are reasonable exceptions to this, however. Does the government agree with this statement, but if not, what exceptions would he make?

Mr. Eggen: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, certainly, that contact between family and school is paramount, and we recognize that. We make sure that we are in communication every step of the way. If there are issues around safety and security or medical things, for example, then of course that communication is always, always there.

When people try to somehow convolute this idea and somehow put it onto GSAs and outing kids that join a GSA, that is unacceptable; it's objectionable. It puts kids at risk, and it's dangerous as well.

2:10

Mr. Fildebrandt: Politicians on all sides inserting themselves between children and parents serves nobody well. Clearly, there must be a middle ground between requiring parental consent for removing an ingrown hair and stripping parents of their right to raise their kids as they see fit. Let's roll back the politics a bit and provide Albertans with clarity. Would the government agree to form an all-party committee to draft a parents' and children's charter of rights and responsibilities that we can hopefully all agree on?

The Speaker: Hon. members, again I must attempt . . .

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, just a moment.

Mr. Eggen: Sorry. Go ahead.

The Speaker: . . . just to remind everyone about those elongated preambles. Be conscious of that, everyone.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, conflating this idea and outing kids that join GSAs. I think the vast majority of Albertans agree with our position. Bill 24 is designed specifically to protect and create safe sanctuary for a very vulnerable position and very vulnerable children. Even just having this discussion in resolution, words on paper hurts. That hurts kids. It compromises their position, and it rolls back the very good work that we've done over these last weeks and months and years to create safe and caring environments for children.

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

Electric Power Prices

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have enjoyed some of the lowest cost electricity in North America for a very, very long time, and now the NDP plan to force wind onto the market, driving power bills up, and to use the carbon tax to subsidize wind if the price drops below the average of 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour. It's 3.1 cents today just to be clear. Will the minister explain: why is the NDP making families pay to keep wind farms from going bankrupt?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're focused on the right priorities for regular families like ensuring the power bills are affordable and predictable. You know, many years ago — there are several years that I cited last week — the power price was more than a hundred dollars. Today it's low, and there's a reason. We need more investment, but we also got a very good price on our first auction, 3.7 cents, which was highly competitive, one of the best in North America and indeed the world, and we're very proud of that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. But today the government is subsidizing at 3.1 cents just to be clear. Given that, Mr. Speaker, the NDP plan to protect families is to subsidize everyone's power bills above 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour and given that the NDP plan to subsidize wind farms when the price drops below 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, again which is today, will the minister table the electricity price forecast I'm sure her department has prepared in order to have come up with these subsidy decisions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2013 were all years when the pool price for electricity was more than a hundred dollars. We're fixing a broken system that we inherited from the previous Conservative government, who favoured backroom deals with their partners rather than thinking about regular Albertans. We're getting rid of those backroom deals. We're standing up for Albertans, and capping prices is one of the ways we're standing up.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I think I would respectfully disagree that the PPA situation has severely broken this situation.

The Market Surveillance Administrator still lacks a permanent head and given that the Market Surveillance Administrator is critical to ensuring that families are not being gouged by the wind generators spiking electricity prices — the surveillance administrator is a competent watchdog — is it true, Minister? Can you please tell Albertans that when you are able to put this Market Surveillance Administrator together, they're not going to be some ideological NDP pawn with no real power?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of the MSA is critically important, and we are, as the member says, in the process of finding a new MSA. But our government's priority is standing up for regular Albertans and making sure the power bills

remain affordable and predictable. That's why we're capping prices. That's why we're introducing a capacity market. Albertans for too long have had this up and down roller coaster that we do not need anymore. When I cite those years – 2001, 2002, 2006, '07, and '13 – I wonder what their explanation is for why those prices were so high?

Provincial Debt

Mr. Barnes: Forty-two thousand dollars are the taxes a 16-year-old Albertan will pay over their lifetime just to pay the interest on the NDP's debt. That's on top of additional income taxes. Fifty thousand: that's the debt burden that a 31-year-old Albertan will pay during their lifetime on just the interest, again, plus higher income taxes. To the minister: how do you consider it fair that Albertans that may go their life without paying interest on their credit card balance each have to pay you \$42,000 in interest?

Mr. Ceci: You know what I find extremely fair, Mr. Speaker? The fact that Albertans today are getting the services and programs they need. When they go to a hospital, there's a hospital there. It's not blown up like in '97, when the General was blown up. If they want to get an education, they can get an education. Albertans aren't having to wait with an infrastructure gap that those people caused, that we're fixing today.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, a recent CBC article highlighted the stark reality of the Premier's managed decline of Alberta's economy. Today only 55 per cent of young men have jobs. Forty-five per cent without work is staggering, a crisis. To the minister: how can you possibly say that everything is fine when a huge sector of our young population does not have employment, the opportunity to build a future, and when they do return to work, they face a wall of NDP interest and NDP debt?

Mr. Ceci: You know, those same young people, Mr. Speaker, had they been under the control of that side and that government, would have faced Alberta Works cuts, like happened in 1993 to '95. Albertans were left to drift because that side wanted to balance the books. That side wanted to get rid of the debt, but they left an infrastructure debt. They don't talk about that. What we talk about is supporting Albertans, making sure they have the supports and programs they need, and helping to build a better future at 4.9 per cent GDP growth. What did you guys do? Nothing.

The Speaker: Hon. member, caution about the preamble, okay?

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the U of C and the CBC reports talk about young Albertans being more likely to be unemployed and they're facing the prospect of having to pay tens of thousands of dollars over their lifetime of NDP interest and debt – that's on top of your already higher taxes – to the minister: how do you expect young families to pay for their education, support their communities, start their families, and still be able to repay billions of dollars of your interest and billions of dollars of your debt?

Mr. Ceci: Well, that's a lot of stuff to do, Mr. Speaker, but I'm so glad this side, the NDP government, is doing that work and the Conservatives are not because we know what they would do. They would slash, cut, and fire. We're not doing that. You know, the Leader of the Opposition's record while in Ottawa – I shared it before – six straight deficit budgets, \$56 billion in one year alone; \$309 billion in interest payments; and \$145 billion to our national

debt. That's no record that we want to follow. We're going to put our own course forward, and it's a great course.

Pipeline Approval and Construction

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, when this NDP government's close friend and federal ally Justin Trudeau imposed upstream emission requirements on the Energy East pipeline project, this government went dead silent. As a result, Trans Canada has decided not to proceed with that investment. My question to the Minister of Energy is very simple. Will you launch a court case against Ottawa for interfering in provincial jurisdiction, and if not, why do you refuse to stand with Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we are working to get a pipeline to tidewater, and we will succeed. We've never been as close as we are right now in securing access to the west coast. If you want to talk about interference, the members opposite, who continue to out gay kids, attack our teachers, make our schools feel unsafe: frankly, you folks have a lot of explaining to do. We will stand with everyday Albertans to do exactly what they want, which is to be a government that's on their side.

2:20

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that we are just 24 days to Kinder Morgan making a decision to proceed or not to proceed with the Trans Mountain pipeline, when was the last time the government of Alberta or the Market Access Task Force spoke to Kinder Morgan to encourage them to proceed with the pipeline expansion project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our Premier and our government are focused on the priorities of Albertans, which is fighting for pipelines. We have two approvals. We're working very hard with folks like industry, the task force, Albertans, anybody who is supporting. We're happy to say that daily and weekly the support for this pipeline is increasing, and we're going to keep working hard to increase that support. That pipeline will be built.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that there are alternative pipeline routes proposed to tidewater, including Eagle Spirit, Foothills via Alaska, the Mackenzie valley, and even the port of Churchill, Minister, what have you done to encourage commercial investment into these alternative routes under the existing regulatory regime before your friends in Ottawa kill those projects as well with their bills C-69 and C-48?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are many pipeline projects in this country and indeed in this province, and we're working with all our proponents who come and meet with us, or we meet with them about them. But to be clear, the closest one to tidewater right now is the TMX, and that's the one that we're putting full efforts on. We've been doing that since we were elected. We're going to continue to do that. We're working every day. I still fail to see why this opposition wants us to fail. We're not letting it fail. We're on the side of Albertans, we're on the side of the energy industry, and we're not going to stop until that pipeline is built.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary-East.

Health Facility Construction Projects in Calgary

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I speak with constituents, especially those who work in health care, they often bring up that hospital infrastructure is something that's been neglected over time under previous governments. I'm excited about the improvements this government has made by investing in the Peter Lougheed maternity and NICU and by committing to build the new Calgary cancer centre. Can the Minister of Infrastructure update us on the progress of this crucial new facility?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Well, the project is on track, and we are happy to see a bustle of activity on the site. The shoring is completed; excavation continues. The installation of the tower cranes has actually been under way already. One of the great things about this facility is that when it's done, it's free. It's free because we believe in public health care. Unlike our friends across the way, who spent the weekend crafting policy that would see folks pay for something like this, when folks who have to use the Calgary cancer centre have to use it after it's built, they're not . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Luff: Given that all of us are touched by cancer at some point in our lives and that Albertans expect world-class care and given that the Calgary cancer centre will be so much more than just a "fancy box," can the minister tell us what this project will mean for Calgarians?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this project, really, is going to have 160 outpatient beds, operational and clinical support services, a clinical trials unit, research laboratories, systemic and radiation treatment services, more than 1,500 jobs. Unlike the folks across the aisle, who characterized it as a "fancy box," the folks who know this sophisticated project know that this is life-changing cancer treatment here in this province that we can be proud of. The folks across the way would privatize it all.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government had a record of literally blowing up hospitals in Calgary, to the same minister: what is this government doing to invest in the health facilities that Calgarians need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, certainly, our capital plan has \$4.6 billion for health facilities, and we think that's pretty important. The Foothills medical centre, \$528 million in upgrades to their emergency room; the Peter Lougheed Centre, \$82 million in consolidation, renovation, and expansion for women's services – we believe in women's services; unlike the folks across the aisle, who talked about feminism being the F-word at their convention, we actually think it's important to invest in women in this province – the power plant expansion, the Foothills medical centre, a total cost of \$52 million; the complex continuing care facility in Calgary . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Carbon Levy Economic Impacts

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, earlier this session I asked that our dedicated school bus drivers be exempted from the NDP's crippling carbon tax. Diesel and gasoline have now hit near-record highs of upwards of \$1.30 per litre. Minister, will you agree to cancel this disastrous tax on Albertans just trying to provide a much-needed service?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our schools and school boards have been working very closely with myself and my ministry to ensure that we have the transportation needs met every step of the way. You know, the best way by which we have done that and have an agreement on that is that we have been funding properly the school system over the last four budgets in a row. I was just with Chinook's Edge on Friday, and they were very pleased with all of the work that we're doing. We're working very co-operatively, and that's the way you do it. You don't do it by trying to pick fights. You do it through co-operation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we continue to hear from volunteer organizations, shelters, food banks, and seniors' support groups about the harmful effects of the carbon tax on their operations, to the minister of environment: will you please just scrap this carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our priority is to ensure that we've got stable, predictable funding for all of our social services, which is why we have done exactly that for the family and community social services funding to municipalities, funding to social housing and other things. That's our priority, building this province, unlike the priorities from across the way, which are outing gay kids, privatizing health care, cutting education funding, attacking teachers, cutting taxes for the very richest among us. We're working for Albertans. They are working for the extremist parts of their party.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing that affects every Albertan like the carbon tax. Given that the NDP carbon tax has not resulted in any of the desired outcomes such as social licence or any measurable reduction in GHGs and given that the only measurable result is the negative effects on investment in our province, Minister, will you do all Albertans a favour and just scrap the tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that we have two pipelines approved. That's a fact. The fact of the matter is that we have country-leading economic growth, and we also have diversification happening. Those are facts.

Now, the folks across the way are not interested in facts. They don't care about the fact that GSAs save lives. They don't care about the fact that privatizing health care will be so hard on working people in this province. They don't care to build and maintain the great standard of living and make life better in this province. All they care about is appeasing the extremist parts of their party. That's what we saw this weekend.

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

Provincial Debt
(continued)

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy and families will pay for the NDP debt for many years to come, and youth will be most burdened. U of C's School of Public Policy calculated the lifetime per-person cost of interest only on the debt projected for 2023. For those 16 to 25 each will pay over \$42,000; for those 26 to 35 each will pay the highest, \$50,000. This is extra taxes for interest only on your debt, Minister. Why have you burdened Alberta's youth in this way without their consent?

Mr. Ceci: It feels like déjà vu all over again question period wise, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that we had a choice, of course. When the price of oil collapsed, we had a choice of slashing like that Conservative side would have done. They would have slashed programs and services and left Albertans adrift and to figure it out on their own. We chose to have the backs of Albertans so that through the recession they had jobs by greater investment in our capital plan than ever before. Ten thousand Albertans kept working, and their businesses kept employing them because of our capital plan, that helped Albertans out.

Mr. Orr: Minister, given that small businesses are the economic engine of this province and most are family owned, but now every family of three will be forced to pay well over a hundred thousand dollars of interest on NDP debt, and given that this will be a huge obstacle in starting businesses and consequently even a larger drag on future economic growth, have you given any consideration at all to how the interest burden is going to stall our economic engine and restrict recovery even more?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposite would stall our economy and the recovery. We grew 4.9 per cent. We led the country in GDP growth. We're going to be among the leaders in 2018 and 2019. We know small business confidence is up. BDC says that small-business confidence is up in Alberta. Thirty-five per cent of small businesses are looking to hire more staff, and 73 per cent say that they'll invest more in their businesses in 2018. This is going in the right direction. The opposition, the Conservatives, want to take us back to 1950. Ozzie and Harriet were here; now we've got Rachel here.

2:30

Mr. Orr: That's kind of rich from a minister who wants to take us all to Ontario and invite us to be one of them.

Minister, given that you have misled Alberta families and are already blaming everything except your own reckless spending and given that if families were to actually make equal interest and debt repayments – in other words, paying twice as much – it would take 24 years for each person to pay back \$80,000 to \$100,000 of interest and debt, do you know anybody who seriously wants to spend the next 24 years of their life to pay \$100,000 of their earnings for your debt?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you for the question. You know, we'll carefully find savings and cut out the Conservative waste that has been left here by that Conservative side. We've done a number of things already. At Q3 I had a \$1.4 billion reduction in the budget in the overall spending in that year, and that was as a result of investments turning a greater profit and of finding more Conservative waste to

cut out of our budget. We're going to keep doing that because that's in the interest of Albertans.

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

Farm and Ranch Worker Safety Regulations

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 17, 2015, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act was introduced by the Minister of Labour. It was a highly contentious bill due in no small part to the complete lack of consultation by this government. This bill received royal assent on December 11 of that same year. Bill 6 has caused enough uncertainty amongst farmers and ranchers. Minister, will you continue to keep them in the dark about your government's next steps?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud of the work that our government has done to ensure farm workers in Alberta have access to the same rights and protections that farm workers across the country have had for years. We promised Albertans that through this process we would consult with farmers, ranchers, working with the community as we implemented recommendations from technical working groups that had membership from the farming and ranching community, those who understood what things were like in that farm and ranch environment and could provide good advice to government. We've been looking at the technical working group recommendations. We've also listened . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers are once more in their fields seeding and calving cows and given that it's been two and a half years since this bill's introduction and given that we still hear from farmers who have no clear idea of what those regulations will look like, to the minister: can Alberta farmers and ranchers expect further consultation and/or clarification?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work with the farming and ranching community as we move forward. Specifically, we worked with the technical working groups, and then we posted the results of the technical working groups for the farming and ranching community to review. We extended that consultation to give people extra time to continue to work with us. We are working with the ag coalition, and as we look to implement regulations, we will again communicate and consult with the farming and ranching community.

Mr. Strankman: Again, Mr. Speaker, given that in the 2018 throne speech the word "agriculture" was not even mentioned and given that this government's record of dealing with the Alberta farmers and ranchers – be it Bill 6 regulations, water licences, or timely wildfire emergency responses – has been less than stellar, what my peers in agriculture would like to know from the minister is that given how contentious some of these regulations can be, will Alberta farmers and ranchers be given an opportunity to see a draft of the OHS regulations and provide additional feedback before these regulations come into force?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We were very pleased to take the recommendations from the technical working groups and make those public so that we could get feedback directly from those in the community. That consultation wrapped up very recently, and I'm very excited about the number of responses we received as well as the help that we've received from the ag coalition to make sure that we're getting this right. We are still on track to have these rules and regulations in effect later this year, and we will continue to work with Alberta's farmers and ranchers to get this right.

Thank you.

Crown Prosecutor Practice Protocol

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, the Justice minister triage protocol has been in place for more than a year. When she introduced it, she said that it was necessary to ensure that serious crimes were not dismissed due to court delays. However, in the past year we have seen accused murderers and alleged perpetrators of sexual assaults walk free. Minister, for the sake of public confidence in Alberta's justice system will you commit today to review your triage policy?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's always our policy at Justice to continue examining our policies as we move forward. In the wake of the Jordan decision we had a choice to make. We had to respond to ensure that cases were not being lost in court. Some of those had been in process for quite a long time, and there was nothing we could do about them at this stage, but we had to make sure that cases going forward had the best chance. We made policy changes, and we've also been investing in our system. If the members opposite are so worried about it, perhaps they should have voted for the budget.

Mr. Taylor: I wonder if they're issuing get-out-of-jail-free cards.

Given that other provinces have chosen to clear court backlogs by investing in the justice system rather than implementing a triage system that encourages the Crown to drop criminal charges and given that the minister originally indicated that she may abandon the triage system once court backlogs dwindle – Minister, it's been a year – has the triage protocol become a permanent policy of your government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like those other jurisdictions, we have chosen to ensure that we are supporting our justice system and supporting our victims of crime by investing in the system. We've made investments in all aspects of the system from the office of the Chief Medical Examiner to policing to Crown prosecutors to courts and to court clerks. I wish the members opposite would support those decisions.

Mr. Taylor: Given that the objective of the triage protocol is to ensure "that serious and violent crime is given priority and prosecuted effectively" and given that I became acutely aware of the triage protocol after the tragic death of two young constituents and that most Albertans have no idea that some serious criminal cases are now not being dealt with to the fullest extent of the law, Minister, how can you continue to justify your triage protocol to Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our triage policy is absolutely clear that it intends to prioritize serious and violent cases. The allegations coming from across the way that it's not serious when someone has a fatality on the highway is absolutely untrue. We think that those matters are serious. Those are exactly the matters that we attempt to prioritize, and any allegation to the contrary is just absurd.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Support for Seniors

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My home constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is a unique community of many new families as well as long-standing generations of farm families. Our needs are diverse and unique. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how are you continuing to support seniors, that have built Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seniors are vibrant members of our province, and we're committed to supporting them. I have travelled all across this province and met with many, many seniors, and I know they want to age in their communities, close to their loved ones. One of our core programs, the Alberta seniors' benefit, provided financial assistance to more than 150,000 seniors last year, and that's just one example of the many programs we have to make life better for seniors.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the commitment that our government has shown to support seniors and the significant investment in programs that they rely on, Minister, what else are you doing to better the lives of seniors in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know seniors across the province want to stay in their communities as they age. That is why our government invested \$250,000 in planning funding for Heartland Housing Foundation. This funding helped the town of Fort Saskatchewan plan for a growing seniors' population. And we are helping seniors who need housing right now by opening the new Beaverhill Pioneer Lodge in Lamont. These investments show our government's commitment to protecting vital public services seniors count on.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, and thank you to the minister for investing in building the Beaverhill Pioneer Lodge.

Given the challenges that our economy faces as it begins to recover, many seniors are still having trouble making ends meet because of living on a fixed budget. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how are you ensuring that seniors are not left behind in this recovery?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member very much for her advocacy on this issue. Our government invested more than \$3 billion in seniors' programs last year. In Budget 2018 we maintain stable funding for seniors. We

increase funding for the seniors' home adaptation and repair program. The opposition's reckless plan would give big tax giveaways to those at the top and cut the support seniors depend on. Our plan is focused on helping the economy grow and diversifying while protecting the vital public services Albertans count on.

2:40

Health Care Wait Times (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Deputy Premier and Health minister in response to some questions to the Premier about health wait time increases went on with continuing to campaign to be the Official Opposition and just with partisan rhetoric. We're talking about a serious issue. Wait times have drastically increased under this government's watch. People continue to die, sadly, in queue in our province while this minister has completely failed to follow through on her promises to them on wait times. Minister, why have you failed, and what are you doing about it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate what I actually said, I said that we are working to make life better, and we're among the best in the country on things like hip fracture repair, knee replacement, and radiation therapy. Our 17 stroke treatment centres are the best in Canada and among the fastest in the world. But that's not good enough. On this side of the House we want to make sure that all health care wait times are shorter. We're working to make sure that it's for every Albertan, not just those who can afford private, two-tiered, American-style health care like the members opposite are proposing. We are fighting to make sure that everyone in this province has quality health care, and we won't let you guys move forward ramming privatization, two-tiered health care, and deep cuts on the public system.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister said earlier that she was proud of the wait times and that still will not stand up in this Assembly and even attempt to try to answer a question – now, I get it. I would be ashamed of this record, too, if I was this minister. This minister is responsible for seeing an increase in wait times, something like heart valve surgery going up by 6.5 weeks. This costs people their lives. This is serious business. So can the minister drop her rhetoric, stand up, and explain what went wrong, how she has so terribly failed on this file, and how she's going to fix it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2018 the government proposed a \$40 million increase to reduce wait times for surgeries like cancer surgeries, hip and knee fracture replacements. What did the members opposite do? They voted against that very budget. On this side of the House we are fighting to make sure that we have quality public health care, that everyone has access regardless of how much money they have in the bottom of their pockets. And what did you spend your weekends doing? Promoting private, two-tiered, U.S. style health care. Those ideas aren't the ones that are going to be guiding us on how to make life better for Alberta families. We're going to be doing it by investing in services that families count on.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House fully supports public health care.

But it is interesting to see the Deputy Premier stand up and continue to do the same thing. She cannot answer the question on how she has failed so miserably on this file. Wait times went up under her watch. It's a question of outcomes, not a question of spending. This minister and this government have failed on this file. Why? How are you going to fix it? Stop hiding behind the rhetoric.

Stand up and tell us what you're going to do because Albertans won't put up with this anymore.

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, if they believe in public health care, why did they just pass resolutions on the weekend to privatize health care? You guys need to get your story straight. You can't say one thing on Sunday to your base, that's pushing for extreme cuts, privatization, two-tiered health care, and another thing in this House on Monday and think that we're not going to hold you to account. On this side of the House we have effectively reduced wait times for hip fracture repair, knee replacement, radiation therapy, stroke treatment. And that's not enough. That's why we put \$40 million in the budget to help to reduce it in other areas. Those guys voted against it. They keep voting to privatize, outsource, and bring in U.S. style health care, and we're not going to allow that.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this might be a good time for a 30-second break, and then we will go with the next member's statement.

Members' Statements (continued)

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

Long-term Care Beds

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government promised to build 2,000 new long-term care beds over four years. The Ministry of Health confirms that over 1,600 beds the government is taking credit for were already under way with the previous government's ASLI program. Only three true long-term care facilities have been initiated by the government of Alberta, at least in political promises to date. They are Edmonton Norwood, 145 new beds and another 200 replacement beds, to be clear; Bridgeland for 200 new beds; Fort McMurray Willow Square with 144 new beds.

The Calgary and Fort McMurray projects will cost \$241 million to build 344 beds. The Alberta Continuing Care Association notes that if the ASLI funding model had been used, this money could have resulted in the building of 3,700 beds, 10 times as many. Two combined acute-care and long-term care facilities opened by the government were started by the previous government: in Edson, 100 beds; in High Prairie health complex, 100 beds. And, of course, the Grande Prairie hospital was started before, with 176 new beds. ASLI funding funded an average of \$65,000 per bed but is never even considered now by the AHS.

Site-based home care could be provided from new purpose-built seniors' apartments with sprinklers and barrier-free access. They would have no capital costs, no wait time to build. This could serve many more Alberta communities and suburbs instead of only Calgary and Edmonton. Also, the Health Quality Council of Alberta finds that private, public, and not-for-profit deliver the same care. Ownership doesn't change that. Operating costs for site-based home care are often much lower than for long-term care at \$150 a day or acute care at \$1,100 to \$1,500 a day.

Mr. Speaker, with only one year in this elected term to go and fewer than 900 new beds in the works, when will this government change course or just admit that the promise of 2,000 new beds is indeed a broken promise?

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an article from *Maclean's* magazine about the demolition of the Calgary General hospital, entitled *When a Hospital Dies*. I made reference to that demolition in question period this afternoon.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a column from the CBC entitled *Still No Money for Deerfoot Trail* after "Affordable" Fixes Identified.

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two reports. First of all, from the CBC: *Why Young Men Are Being Left out of Alberta's Economic Recovery*. I have the five reports that, sadly, explain how, since this government was elected, the number of unemployed men is up to 45 per cent of the workforce between 15 and 24 years old. What a shame that is.

My second report is *Fiscal Policy Trends*, from the University of Calgary. It clearly explains, Mr. Speaker, the burden of the interest and debt that this NDP government and this Finance minister are placing on our next generation.

Thank you.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table five copies of the pamphlet the NDP government has sent to the mailboxes of all Albertans announcing subsidized electricity for all. Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 203 Long Term Care Information Act

[Debate adjourned April 30]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in the House to speak on Bill 203, Long Term Care Information Act. Bill 203 was introduced by my colleague from Red Deer-North. This bill will create a registry accessible to the public to disseminate information on each long-term care facility in Alberta and ensure that it's regularly updated.

Now, as the population is aging, thousands of Alberta families are going to have to start making important decisions on their care and the care of their family members. This is something that every family has to go through. Of course, most seniors I know would prefer to stay in their homes as long as possible and, of course, have medical care provided in their homes. This would help clear up spaces in our long-term care facilities and help seniors live where they want to live. However, there comes a point when a family has to sit down and decide when it's time to move to a facility with greater care. It can be an overwhelming experience just trying to compare all the different facilities and all the options they provide.

2:50

There are many factors to consider, everything from cost to availability to personal care options, which brings us to the bill

before the House, Bill 203. Bill 203 would put all the information on long-term care facilities into an easy-access registry that could help seniors and their families make very informed and important decisions. The information that this registry would include would be, of course, the name and contact information of the operator of the facility; the type of facility; the total number of residents; the description of the intake process; obviously, services provided by the facility; accommodation charges; and other information. Can you imagine a senior and their family trying to gather this information on their own?

As I mentioned before, it can be a very time-consuming process, looking at all the different long-term care options. Now, having all this information readily available could save families time and could help give them peace of mind in what could already be an extremely difficult and a very stressful situation.

The registry would also enable seniors to make their own choices for long-term care facilities if they're able to do so and without having one chosen for them by a continuing care placement co-ordinator. Now, this would give independence to seniors, which is something I believe they actually seek.

Furthermore, such a registry could help to decipher all the information present and allow potential residents to give input into the system. This could allow for the registry to potentially find the best fit for seniors who are seeking a long-term care facility.

Now, that being said, I don't think I have to go any further into the merits of such a registry. However, similar resources already exist in various formats available online. On the government of Alberta website exists a list of all the long-term care facilities funded by the government of Alberta. This data set already includes much of the information that this bill seeks to put within a registry. Further, the Alberta website has a searchable website where people can search for continuing care facilities throughout Alberta. With this, it is important to ask: will this bill potentially be redundant, or will this bill in some way expand the information that is available to Albertans? Will this bill increase the frequency that this information is updated? One would hope so.

As my previous points have indicated, this bill does have a lot of good points and does do a good deal of service for Albertans. I do question the redundancies, however, as I wouldn't want to have an increase in bureaucracy and cost if we're forcing multiple different government employees to be publishing the exact information. Or is it the case that this bill would just possibly be replacing previous online resources that are currently available? As I'm not a fan of duplication of process, especially in government, I would hope that multiple different government websites are not all providing the exact same service. That would be quite wasteful, especially in times when we're already facing an \$8 billion deficit.

Further, Alberta Health Services already has the ability to create the website without passing legislation. It is ultimately unlikely, with the large Health budget, that there's not been the capacity to get this done. I believe that the Department of Health, with the Health budget, and Alberta Health Services have sufficient IT departments and resources – I'm pretty sure they do – to be able to provide this on their own without legislation. Again, I don't have an issue with the ideas behind Bill 203, but I don't want to create redundancies.

Further, it is important to note that there are other pressing issues facing long-term care in Alberta. Now, we might recall that the Auditor General in the 2017 report identified many issues with long-term care in Alberta. These include a recommendation to create a system to periodically verify that facilities have a sufficient level of staff every day of operation and to "develop a system to periodically verify that facilities [provide] the [correct] care every day by implementing individual resident care plans and meeting

basic needs of residents.” I think these issues are a higher priority than the content of Bill 203 such that I believe that if a private member’s bill on long-term care was introduced, the issues that were mentioned by the Auditor General should have been addressed.

As mentioned earlier, if information on long-term care facilities is already available online, then why would we need to introduce this bill to potentially duplicate resources and services? With the issues facing residents in long-term care facilities, our time as legislators should be used to address these issues raised by the Auditor General and other issues that are being raised by our constituents regarding long-term care.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Bill 203 is a beneficial piece of legislation that can aid seniors and families in making decisions on long-term care facilities. However, this is likely a duplication of service that is already provided. I think that’s something we need to consider. While the goals of this bill are good, it is important that this government realize that there are many issues additionally in long-term care that they could be addressing, as per what was stated, as I said earlier, in the 2017 Auditor General’s report. Potentially, maybe Bill 203 could have included some of that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak to the Long Term Care Information Act and the long-term care system in Alberta. This is about people being able to make informed decisions and understanding that folks that are in these particular situations need to be informed and need to be brought into the conversation.

In concept, the bill looks very good. There are a few things, of course, that I’m concerned about, that I’d like to chat about a bit, but the concept of the bill is quite beneficial and, hopefully, will move the health care system in the right direction. Having said that, though, it’s similar to what the member had said with regard to the AISH bill. You don’t want to ever make these decisions without making sure that the stakeholders that are impacted by this are fully informed and that they’re part of this discussion. That’s one of the things, I think, that needs to happen as we go forward, that their decisions are fully informed and that they’re able to participate and that we understand that folks that are in this particular situation are the ones that need to make these right decisions for themselves.

I wanted to understand, too. I have a question: how were people getting this information before? I mean, obviously, we support efforts to improve long-term health care, improve access to information, but is this bill actually giving a solution to that, or is this a redundant part of the information, that already exists? It seems to me that this information is already available.

Long-term care facilities. The potential user of the registry will only have a portion of the information available to them. Why is that? It seems interesting, for lack of a better word, that the importance of putting this bill forward is to make sure that people have access to information, but then they’re not allowed to have the full information, Madam Speaker. That seems to defeat the whole purpose of the registry. If somebody could maybe answer that for me and explain why that is being left out.

I would suggest that more information is better. As I understand it, I mean, if you read the name of the bill, the Long Term Care Information Act, the assumption would be that information is available, right, Madam Speaker? Like, that would be the assumption, but it seems to me that the information is going to only be what it is – I’m not sure. It’s a little bit broad. So I would like

some clarity and some understanding on how the potential user of the registry will be able to access that information. And if my understanding is correct, if only parts of this information are accessible: why?

3:00

The whole point of the bill is to enable access to information. The government had said this on several occasions, about it being a one-stop shop. Well, if the registry itself doesn’t contain all the information and the person who is requiring that information then has to go to the larger registry to find out the rest of the information, this is very complex and complicated. My assumption is to make this easier for people to have access. Again, I have to restate that we already have access to this information. As I understand it, the thing is that they’re going to have to extensively research other pieces of information that are not going to be accessible to them in this particular piece of information. So why do that? I’m certainly not against the bill. I just don’t understand the premise of the bill if the bill is actually stopping access to information, which is what it’s fully intended to do in the first place. I think it’s a really simple question.

Then we’ll be seeing a list of facilities and the criteria laid out in the bill. What will that look like? How is the government going to list facilities and criteria? Is this something that is looked at just like looking on a hotel website, where they show pictures of it and what the rooms look like and various amenities that are available, sort of like a sales pitch for this place? Or is it just basically, “Here’s the facility. Here’s what you have,” and then there will be a government standardized application form built into the website? Do I understand that correctly? How does that work? What is the list of criteria? Or, again, is the government expecting the user to sift through that? I mean, then you’re going to have to get a whole other app to put together for this in order to be able to sort via cost or via whatever it is, whatever the criteria is for this. It would be interesting to see because there is absolutely no idea of how this application will work.

Again, I’m not against the bill. I just find this extremely redundant, and I have no understanding of how the application will be. So if the user is required to sift through the information, that person, then, I believe – I mean, they’re obviously wanting to be able to make their own decisions, but if the government is making it more difficult for the user to find the information, I’m not quite sure what the purpose is. Maybe I’m misunderstanding this. If I’m wrong, that’s just fine. I’m sure it can be explained very, very easily. However, how is a person supposed to determine the best fit for themselves if they’re required to sift through the information?

We’re not sure what that’s going to look like or how that application will work or how people will understand what that is. Are they expected to go and view all of these facilities before they go in there? What if they’re not able to do that? These are all questions that need to be asked in terms of being able to sort through and sift through all of this information. As you can imagine, I mean, all of us have probably booked a trip online before, and that’s minor compared to this. This is a person’s life and where they’re going to be spending their time for the rest of their life. However, all of us have done this online before, and there have been times where you’ve looked at a facility and everything is there, and you show up and it’s not what you expected. That happens sometimes. Of course, that’s our choice to go online and do those things. We can hire somebody to do that as well, but if you’re like me and you go online and you spend hours and hours and hours trying to find where you’re going to go, it’s not always what you expect it to be. It’s my responsibility to find that out.

However, the government is trying to supposedly make this easier for people, but it looks to me, upon reading it, that they're going to have this massive amount of material to go through and sift through based on the government's criteria and what they deem to be a certain particular thing because there is no information about what that looks like. Then a person is supposed to make that decision based on the criteria that the government has depicted at that point in time. I think that we just have to be careful about how that goes and what that looks like. I'll be very interested in hearing from the government's side about what that will look like.

I mean, obviously, we would like our seniors to get the maximum benefit from this. My assumption is that the government is actually trying to make this easier for our seniors, but as you can see, there are things that actually could make it more difficult. You want to get the most value that you possibly can from this registry. You want to make sure that maximum value also has maximum information and that it's easily accessible and that they don't have to go to another site to be able to find out the information that's not on this one because the registry will only have a portion of the information. I think it would be a very easy fix for the government to look at just adding this in to what's maybe already there. But pulling this apart and making another registry may not accomplish what the government's intent is. Just as a suggestion.

I just have a question, too. You know, this is an initiative through the Ministry of Health. Having access to that information is so important for seniors who have made the decision to move to long-term care. Is it required in legislation to do this? Is the bureaucracy necessary in order to create this registration, Madam Speaker, or is there some way that this can be incorporated into what already exists and then have it laid out specifically for seniors to make it easier for them? It's just a question. I mean, right now . . . [Mrs. Aheer's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I don't know if anybody in here or everybody in here has searched for a facility for an aging parent. My parents wanted to live in their own home until they died, and we were certainly prepared to support them to do that. I had somebody come into my office, and they came in and started to talk about looking for long-term care for a parent. I thought I was listening to the details of my own family's story when this person talked to me.

My dad passed away before my mom. He did stay at home, and he died at home in his own bed. However, my mom was by herself. We realized that for the 14 years after my dad died, she was slowly starting to deteriorate. When she offered me a cup of tea and turned the electric kettle on and then took the tea bags and put them on the burner and turned the burner on, I knew we had a bit of a problem. My sister and I talked about it, and then my other siblings talked about it.

Initially we were able to secure two home-care workers that came and broke the week up between the two of them so that they were there with her. However, we knew that that wasn't going to last for a long time because her care required more than they were able to give her, so my siblings and I were looking for facilities. Now, what we had to do was go out and visit every facility to see what it provided. Could we perhaps convince our mother that that's where she needed to be? Well, that's not an easy thing to do. Certainly, we spent – well, I shouldn't say we. I did a little time, but my other sister spent most of the time looking. She didn't just look in my mom's hometown; she looked in areas around each of our homes

because we lived in different areas. What would be the best fit for Mom?

3:10

Well, Mom woke up one morning and slipped on the floor and broke her hip. She had to have surgery. After the surgery her hip healed fine, but she never really came out of the anaesthetic. It meant that we needed to find a place fairly quickly, and she was being kept in the hospital until we could find a bed for her. Now, as I said, there was a lot of time spent looking, and eventually she was moved out of the hospital into a facility that, in fact, we weren't very happy with. In the long run it was a good facility and they provided good care to Mom, but it wasn't a place that Mom would have wanted to be. She didn't have a garden that she could sit in and look at her flowers. It didn't have many of the things that she needed.

However, I've had a number of discussions with my colleague from Red Deer-North about the things that we asked in every facility. In fact, there were a couple of questions that are here that when we asked those facilities, they didn't provide an answer to us. It was the question about the results of inspections. We couldn't get an answer. However, if this is necessitated by this bill, as it is, this would be on the website. I would have to say that being able to go in and access a database that has every bit of information about those facilities that we could consider would have made this a lot easier. In fact, my mother could have participated in this part of it before she had had that surgery.

Ultimately, my mom went to a facility that she had no say in, and in fact we weren't as happy as we would have liked to have been when that facility was chosen for her. However, I can certainly go in and look at all of this so that my kids will not have to do that for me. I can go in, and if at some point I'm going to have to go into a long-term care facility, then I will have that legwork done. In fact, they may go in on the website and be able to verify the things that I've provided to them.

I kind of liken this to buying a car. Years ago, when I bought my first car, my dad and I had a conversation about what I could afford, what kind of a vehicle would be a good vehicle for me to get around, to go to work, to do whatever I had to do. Again, the way we did it was that we went from car dealership to car dealership to car dealership and took those vehicles out for a ride. Now I can go in and I can put the parameters for what I want into the computer at a dealership, and they can come up with the car that I want to get, they can come up with the price, and they can meet all those parameters. For me, I find that this bill actually addresses that, and it would have addressed it had that been in place when my mother needed to go to a facility.

I stand in absolute support of this bill, and I thank the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing this bill forward as her private member's bill because I know from our conversations that many of her constituents have also talked to her about this, as they have in my constituency.

Thank you very much. I stand in full support of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's actually a real pleasure for me to rise to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I just need to verify. Have you already spoken on this bill?

Dr. Turner: Oh, I apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: You have spoken already on this bill.

Dr. Turner: I'll wait for Committee of the Whole.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other member who wishes to speak? The hon. member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to this very thoughtful private member's bill brought forward by the Member for Red Deer-North. A number of reasons, personally, that I'm very pleased to rise in support of this piece of legislation stem from my lengthy career as a real estate agent, when in many, many cases the reason for sale of a property was that the client, the seller, was entering into a stage of life where they needed long-term care. They could no longer live in their own home, either one or both of the owners. Quite often it was the one surviving owner of the house, and that necessitated, as it often does, that the real estate agent get involved in family discussion on providing services that are needed to house in long-term care the surviving tenant of the property that's going to be sold. Very often as a service to clients, of course, real estate agents will apprise themselves of all different types of information that is going to be helpful to get their client to move into the next suitable property, and in this particular case it's to find and be apprised of what options there are for long-term care for that client.

Numerous times we would as real estate agents consult with each other in our own brokerages and talk about places that we happened to know of or had happened to situate past clients in and had good success with. Notwithstanding the fact, as some members have pointed out, that there's a list of long-term care facilities on the government website and that there might have been a list of such facilities in publications such as those put out by SAGE, the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton, there was always a question as to whether or not they were totally comprehensive, accurate, and up to date. The requirement wasn't there that the existing facilities actually had to register.

That's a small gap in the legislation, and that is served by this private member's bill. That's what private members are responsible to fulfill. When they discover a small gap in legislation that can be satisfied with a change in the rules and governance, then this is what a private member's responsibility is to do, and I think the Member for Red Deer-North had done just that in this case. She's found a need that families have and professionals such as real estate agents have when an individual who's no longer able to live independently needs to find the most appropriate long-term care facility and has to rely on information that might be incomplete.

I know that, for example, when discussing with colleagues in the office about situating an individual in a certain long-term care facility that was close to home and accessible by relatives and had the right type of services available, somebody else would pipe up and say: hey, did you hear about this one? And we hadn't, so it was not completely comprehensive, and it left one wondering if we had actually been able to give the right advice to that particular family. This piece of legislation addresses that risk of perhaps not having all the information at hand for a family to be able to make the correct and fulsome decision to situate that family member in the most appropriate long-term care facility. It does address a niche that was a gap in the information that families, I think, deserve to have when they're making that decision.

It really makes a huge difference in the life of an individual who's going into long-term care to get it right the first time. If indeed a person has to go through and switch long-term care facilities after they've lived in one for a while, one that was chosen by family members in consultation with anybody they could find who would

let them know about facilities that were available, only to discover subsequently that there was a better option that existed that they didn't really know about, that would have prevented the necessity of a secondary transitional move, that's a really unfortunate situation to find oneself in. It's difficult for particularly the elderly to face significant changes in their life.

3:20

A move is one of the most stressful things that a person can go through. Secondary to loss of a spouse or a divorce, moving is the third most stressful life event that a person can go through. That's something that I dealt with every day of my life as a real estate agent. So if we can avoid a situation where an elderly person has to move a second time because family members discover that there's a more appropriate facility that they could have selected had they known about it, that's a huge, huge benefit to the lives of seniors and their families that is addressed by this private member's bill.

I really am pleased that the Member for Red Deer-North has brought it forward. It may not seem to be a huge cog in the wheel of life, but when it's your mom or your dad or your grandparents who are facing that decision as to where they will live in the waning years of their life to get the best care and also how they can situate themselves close to family members who are assisting and visiting and monitoring and overseeing that family member's care, those are hugely important logistical decisions and, I would say, health as well as mental health decisions not only for the person receiving long-term care but for those caregivers who are undertaking responsibility to make sure that their parent, their loved one, their aunt, their uncle, whoever the individual that they're caring for might be, is indeed making the best decision the first time to avoid a possible secondary move, which is totally upsetting and unsettling, particularly for individuals who are seniors and no longer exercising independent decisions and feeling that loss of independence as a debilitating experience.

To have to go through it a second time is really something that should be avoided, and I think this bill goes a long way to addressing that. One of the consequences of it is that you'll have seniors or individuals needing long-term care in a facility that is the most appropriate facility available at the time given that they would have access to an up-to-date resource of facilities that exist throughout the province.

I applaud the efforts of the member for responding to this need and addressing the concerns of families who are under enough stress as caregivers already that they shouldn't be given the burden of possibly having to make this decision twice. I fully support the legislation and the private member's focus on the concerns of her constituents as well as the benefit to seniors that this legislation provides, those individuals who built our province and deserve our absolute respect and attention when it comes to making sure that the actions of government make their life easier.

That's, of course, a focus of this government, whether it's long-term care for seniors or any other health aspect of a senior's life. We definitely respect and recognize the contribution of our seniors to the province and its well-being. I for one am, of course, above the certain age that is going through a similar process myself, having done so with grandparents and now with parents, a surviving mother. That is something that I face daily, the question of keeping my ailing mother in her own home, which she's been able to do so far with the help of a live-in caregiver. But, you know, at some point it may be possible that that type of an in-house caregiving situation doesn't meet her needs. So definitely knowing exactly what long-term care facilities might be available when that time comes for us as a family to make a decision and make a choice is going to be

essential. I can't imagine how regretful I would be if we indeed made a decision to place my mom in a long-term care facility and then found out that there was a better option, that we didn't know about, that we might have known about had this registry existed.

I really look forward to the establishment of this registry. That component of it I think is really important and will be a very helpful and welcome service for families such as my own which are in the midst of making those decisions for a loved one. I applaud once again the efforts and thoughtfulness of the Member for Red Deer-North and look forward to passage of the legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to invite the hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very happy to rise today and speak to my bill, Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. While crafting the bill, it was very important to me to look into what other jurisdictions were doing regarding the availability of long-term care information. I was pleased to see that other provinces had put in place similar resources to what I am proposing in my bill. While the context of information varies from province to province, there are plenty of examples of provincial governments supporting people investigating long-term care options. British Columbia, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland have comprehensive sites that include all types of continuing care facilities.

However, it is important to note, Madam Speaker, that those accessing these websites need to have a strong understanding of the language used in order to differentiate between the types of care offered. Inspection reports are available within some regions by way of an extra link, as is the case with B.C. and Ontario. However, this information varies as well. Currently Saskatchewan is revamping its website, taking the responsibility of providing this information from regional health authorities and placing it with the provincial government. In Manitoba, P.E.I., and Nova Scotia there are listings, but they encompass all aspects of health and not just long-term care. As a result, they do not necessarily make it an easy, one-stop shop model.

I'm proud to say that this bill can provide consistency, accuracy, and information that enables those searching to have the majority of their questions answered through the information provided. From the crossjurisdictional research we can confirm the importance of having this information available within a one-stop resource and that the variety of approaches serve as an interesting sample of the ways we could potentially approach this issue in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, this bill serves to support a framework that enables Albertans looking into long-term care to identify the qualitative information that is available immediately. This bill serves to provide the basic contact information, operator and facility type, total resident capacity, additional services and fees, inspections and results as well as establishment. Additionally, it makes it a requirement that this information be updated regularly to ensure the integrity of the information is accurate. This bill will also ensure the government has the flexibility to include additional information that Albertans deem necessary and require. Transparency regarding inspections and outcomes also serves to provide opportunity for corrective measures to be implemented and addresses systematic gaps that hinder compliance.

My Long Term Care Information Act is aimed at easing the stress and streamlining information required when a loved one is determining which long-term care facility best serves their needs, and that, Madam Speaker, makes life easier for Albertans. As

individuals choosing our forever homes, our needs are a priority in making the best decision, and having that information available in one location enables and empowers the right decision-making process. I have done the research, spoken to governing agencies as well as enlisted the feedback from constituents, and there is strong support for a resource that provides ease of access to this information. As I mentioned, this bill speaks to certain criteria required to build this resource, but that does not mean that more information cannot be provided.

My Long Term Care Information Act will establish transparency regarding space availability as well as maintain acceptable standards of information, but what it also does, Madam Speaker, is to provide the information within one stop. That supports transparency, and this is what Albertans are asking for.

3:30

While there are numerous items that this website can disclose, Madam Speaker, it is important to remember that availability of specific items such as dietary issues can also be addressed within the forum of the resident and family council body.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:31 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	McPherson
Anderson, S.	Gotfried	Miller
Anderson, W.	Gray	Nielsen
Ceci	Hinkley	Nixon
Clark	Hoffman	Panda
Coolahan	Horne	Payne
Cooper	Hunter	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Sabir
Dach	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Drever	Larivee	Schreiner
Drysdale	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Eggen	Luff	Stier
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Westhead
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard
Gill	McKittrick	

Totals: For – 47 Against – 0

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed, I've had a request to revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly one of my constituents, Jim McIndoe. Mr. McIndoe is a University

of Calgary graduate who spent 40 illustrious years in the oil and gas industry, mainly on the exploration and production side of the business. He started and sold four exploration and production companies during his career before retiring as CEO of NuLoch Resources. He continued as a director for NuLoch after it was sold to an American company in 2011. Since then he has been involved in various private enterprises and enjoying retirement. Mr. McIndoe is married with three children and six grandchildren, and he is joined today in the gallery by his daughter Leanne Kidd.

Mr. McIndoe is with us to listen to the debate on adverse possession because, as I will note later, he is a victim of this legislation and ended up losing over a thousand square feet of his residential lot because of adverse possession. I'm sure he never thought he would be a relative expert on this subject. He has been a tireless ally in bringing this legislation forward, and I hope that we are able to pass Bill 204 as it will prevent a situation like Jim's and all of the stress and loss that he suffered through that process, and hopefully we'll be able to make it never happen to another constituent of mine and yours ever again. I would now ask that Jim and his daughter Leanne Kidd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today to introduce Bill 204, the Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, into second reading. As heavy-handed as it may sound, the phrase "possession is nine-tenths of the law" may be true. In fact, it is true in today's Alberta after just 10 short years of possession. Or maybe it's just a case of: what's yours is mine, and what's mine is mine with respect to current Alberta law.

3:50

Bill 204 seeks to remove all reference to the legal doctrine of adverse possession, commonly known as squatters' rights, from Alberta's legislation in order to ensure that it is no longer grounds for claims, de facto legal seizure of land from the registered owner, who, in most cases, is just another good neighbour unaware of this outdated, archaic legislation.

In fact, as I just mentioned, joining us in the House today is one of my constituents, who in a recent adverse possession judgment, in *Moore versus McIndoe*, lost approximately 1,000 square feet of a suburban residential lot without compensation to such a claim and after thousands of dollars in legal bills fighting for what he felt were principles of fairness and reasonableness. Indeed and sadly, the outcome was not in his favour given current legislation, and in the application of law and administration of justice in this case, Madam Speaker, I ask you if that is justice.

Again, adverse possession in Alberta enables a trespasser who is occupying land without legal title for a period of 10 years as identified by surveys, land registration, and title, as reflected in our adopted Torrens system of land registration, to be recognized as the legal owner, indeed, a legal seizure under current law of somebody else's registered titled land.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to be bringing this bill forward today, following on the good and principled work of past and current members of this Legislature. In fact, as previously introduced, we have the former Member for St. Albert Mr. Ken Allred – I see he's joined us in the members' gallery – with us

today, and of course the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod sits with us as my colleague in this House. What is the history with respect to attempts to address this issue? MLA Allred's Motion 507 was agreed to on November 28, 2011. MLA Allred's private member's bill 204 was passed unanimously on second reading on March 12, 2012. MLA Stier's Bill 204 was introduced to this House in 2017 in the Third Session of this Legislature. Now, again, ironically, in 2018, yes, another Bill 204.

I'm honoured to bring this bill forward on the strength of the past efforts of our legislative colleagues because I truly believe that adverse possession has no place in Alberta legislation in the future. If passed, Bill 204 would ensure that adverse possession would no longer constitute a legal basis for possessors to seize land without compensation and to take title of land that they have never paid for nor has ever legally belonged to them prior to exercising such a claim. Yes, that could be your good neighbour or in the rare case, that could become the not-so-rare case, as we now see in urban and suburban Alberta – often we think of this in rural terms, but the person who does not subscribe to your expectation of the good neighbour policy might be that neighbour that you face and purely because your fence was not on the survey line when it was built 10 years and one day ago.

Yes, currently in Alberta if a person possesses that land that does not belong to them for 10 or more years, so that 10 years and one day, they may legally claim title to the property, which in my mind clearly flies in the face of Alberta's very efficient land titles system, with its accurately marked boundaries, well-surveyed land titles, and the expectation of validity of commonly referenced real property reports, of which, I would suggest, any Alberta homeowner is quite familiar from when they've purchased or sold a home. Indeed, most would argue that this is conclusive proof of a registered owner's interest in the land.

Further, the government as owner and operator of the land registry guarantees the inviolability of current certificate of title as an accurate record of registered interests. I think we would all assume that that is the case. Madam Speaker, I believe and I'm encouraging the members of this House to agree that this is how it should be to allow peace of mind and certainty of title to all Albertans who have worked hard to become proud land- or homeowners. Historically land tenure in England, from where we inherited adverse possession, was based on boundaries indicated by general markers such as hedges, fences, ditches, probably a few castles in the middle. This is known as a general boundary system. As such, it was difficult to determine with precision the true boundaries of a plot of land, and property disputes were therefore common. Given that context, Madam Speaker, it is easy to understand why England established the doctrine of adverse possession, but in Alberta we adopted the Torrens system of land registration. Under the Torrens system the title to land in Alberta is registered and guaranteed by the province – registered and guaranteed; I'll repeat that – based on accurately surveyed parcels prior to the grant of title by the Crown. That sounds to me like ownership.

To this day the extent of a person's title is determined by those surveys, a measure which quite reliably protects landowners from such unjustified and inexplicable loss of property, as I'm sure Mr. McIndoe would be more than happy to share with members of this House if they so choose. Reliance on this well-established, government-administered land title registry system has avoided countless property disputes between neighbours, and in cases where disputes arise, landowners can easily resolve the problem by verifying the original survey.

As we can see, Madam Speaker, the principle and issues that adverse possession was meant to resolve in jolly old England never actually existed in Alberta. To this day the doctrine does not offer any real benefit to everyday Albertans. In fact, it has caused a number of difficult legal challenges over the years. In 1965 the city of Calgary lost numerous plots of land to an adverse possession claim, and in 1993 irrigation districts also lost land in two adverse claims. This Legislative Assembly subsequently amended legislation to ban adverse possession claims against municipalities and irrigation district lands. Such amendments made abundant sense under the circumstances to protect those parties from spurious claims. By passing Bill 204 and abolishing adverse possession completely, we will afford that same protection to all Albertans.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, an action for adverse possession in 1948 deprived a landowner of some significant improvements on the land, which resulted in an amendment to the Land Titles Act, which is now entrenched in the Law of Property Act under section 69, which is very beneficial to Albertans and, in fact, has been duplicated in other provinces. Section 69 of the Law of Property Act enables a landowner who has mistakenly built lasting improvements on a neighbour's land to lay a claim to that land so that they do not lose their investment or assets. The legislation requires the occupier to pay fair and just compensation to the true landowner in keeping with the spirit of the law while protecting both the legal owner and the land of the neighbour who may have built on that in good faith. So we do have protection for unusual circumstances by abolishing adverse possession.

Section 69 of the Law of Property Act adequately addresses problems of building encroachments among other similar issues that may arise from time to time, so that protection is afforded by section 69. Knowing that section 69 in the Law of Property Act is in place, we can rest assured that the abolition of adverse possession will certainly not leave a gap in our legislation. Instead, it will make room for more modern and relevant laws to protect Alberta landowners and bring us in conformity with all other Canadian Torrens jurisdictions that currently ban adverse possession.

Madam Speaker, perhaps it is finally time – and maybe three times will be the charm for Bill 204 – to pass these measures in the abolition of adverse possession once and for all in Alberta. This in turn will further support the integrity of the registry system and the reliability of the title record and would serve to protect the land- and homeowners I believe it is intended for and the rights they believe they hold with respect to private property.

Madam Speaker, you can think about this in an urban setting. Again, we think of this in a rural setting. But what if you own a 25-foot piece of land, an urban infill here in the city of Edmonton? You build a fence on the north side, and it's six inches on the wrong side, inside your property, and you build one on the south side, and it's six inches in. Now you actually have a 24-foot lot. Well, actually, at that point in time you do not meet the setback regulations when you build a home on that. So if push came to shove, you could actually be told that your house is not compliant.

These are the kinds of issues we could face, and we could face thousands of adverse possessions across this city and across this province because fences have been in the wrong place for 10 years and a day. That is not right, Madam Speaker. In that light, I ask you to support Bill 204.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 204? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. I want to thank my colleague

the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for the leadership he has displayed in introducing this bill. He's allowing all of us in this Chamber to end an unfair practice that over decades became law through our common-law system. He is also allowing Alberta's United Conservatives to end the NDP's practice in committee of burying progressive movement on this issue.

4:00

Madam Speaker, if any one of us walked out on the street today and told the first person we came across that someone could set up on their land and then after 10 years it would become theirs even if it's been in your family for generations, they would not believe us. They would think that we're talking about some old bylaw that was on the books but everyone ignored. In fact, that's not true, and I can provide a recent example of how challenging it can be.

You know, Madam Speaker, I'll tell a little story about something that happened right in my community and not that many years ago. There was a fellow that owned quite a bit of land there, and one of his quarter sections had an old shack on it, and a struggling family moved into that shack and happily lived there for quite a while. The landowner was okay with that because he thought he was helping this family out and doing the right thing, and everybody lived quite harmoniously and peacefully for quite a few years.

Nine years later he became aware of this adverse possession. Luckily for him, he found out about it in nine years and not 10 years. The sad part was that, obviously, the family that moved into the shack was well aware of the adverse possession, and the landowner couldn't get them to move out. The guy even told him: well, in a year from now this is going to be my land, anyway. He had no choice. He got the police involved because he couldn't get them to move off his land. Actually, when the police went out there, it ended up being a standoff with weapons and firearms, and there were young children in the house. He eventually let the children and the wife out, and most of the day they had a standoff.

Eventually they did get the guy to give in, and they arrested him and took him to jail. Of course, the guy wasn't in jail that long. He got out, and the family lived there throughout the whole time he was in jail. I'm not saying anything, Madam Speaker, but for some reason mysteriously that house got burned down one night, and I guess the problem was resolved. Why would we force people to have to come to do these things?

With this legislation now I'm sure that that fellow would have been happy to let that family keep living there. They could still be living there today, but because of the laws that we have, he wasn't able to do that. Hopefully, we'll get support to pass this legislation here today, and things like that won't have to happen again.

Madam Speaker, to abolish adverse possession, or squatters rights, as it's often better known, has gone on far too long. In recent years we have found opportunities to take steps that delete it from our statutes. We came close with a former colleague, Mr. Allred, the former Member for St. Albert, who is here today observing. I know he worked long and hard to get this done. He came really close. He introduced the motion, it passed first and second readings, and then it died on the Order Paper, Madam Speaker. So it came close once.

Then in 2014 it came up again. The Property Rights Advocate recommended abolishing adverse possession by resurrecting Mr. Allred's private member's bill, but nothing happened.

In 2016 Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship sought to support the Property Rights Advocate with another motion to abolish adverse property rights, but the NDP members used their majority to send it to Justice for a review. And what happened next? The information we received was that the Alberta Law Reform Institute is "currently developing its

work plan for this project.” So here we are – what? – three years later, and they haven’t even got a work plan started yet. Madam Speaker, that information was provided to the committee after the fact because Justice could not answer the question in committee.

So what did we learn? Years after the Resource Stewardship Committee provided clear direction to start the work to abolish adverse possession, the department was still developing its work plan. Does that even make sense? Who is accountable for this issue being shelved? It’s not the bureaucrats. They take their orders from the minister. So we can only presume that the minister is choosing to ignore the all-party committee’s recommendation.

In October 2017 the Resource Stewardship Committee gave another strong push, this time suggesting that the Legislative Assembly review adverse possession and other property rights issues, but the government members had other plans. They once again used their majority to put forward a motion, which we were unable to change, directing the government to do the review. This was seven months ago, and as expected, the NDP has simply buried the issue.

Madam Speaker, that is why I’m so pleased to see the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek bring forward Bill 204. Once again we’re going to give this a try, and hopefully with the co-operation of all members in the House we can maybe be successful this time. We can do it here in the Assembly in quick order. As I mentioned at the outset, should the average Albertan learn about this law, they would be shaking their heads if every member of this Chamber did not simply vote in favour of it today.

Madam Speaker, Alberta’s United Conservatives have fundamental respect for property rights. We work tirelessly to ensure that the right of all Albertans to freely own, enjoy, and exchange property is protected. Our commitment to this principle will never waiver. You know, it just seems like common sense to me. This shouldn’t be that hard to do, and it’s been tried quite a few times.

I know that a lot of the members on the opposite side aren’t rural. I know there are a couple of rural members over there. It’s hard for somebody living in a city to understand. You couldn’t even imagine if somebody moved into your backyard in the city and squatted there in a tent and stayed there for 10 years and all of a sudden said that it was their land. Like, you can’t even imagine that happening. But that’s what’s happening in rural Alberta. It doesn’t make sense, but hopefully, you know, through this member’s bill here today we’ll have support in this House and finally get this archaic law removed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to get up and speak to this private member’s bill. Of course, that private member’s bill was in this House previously. It’s always good to debate private members’ bills in this House because they come forward from members who are very passionate about the particular topics that they bring forward.

I listened to the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek’s opening and the rationale for the bill. Of course, I myself and the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek both represent urban ridings in Calgary. His is a little bit more suburban than mine, but, you know, the same sort of issues apply. I agreed with him when he talked about issues about when you have infills, like when you have a fence on one side that’s slightly out or a fence on the other.

In my riding of Calgary-Currie the original houses in certain parts of that area were built as early as 1910, 1920, and since in Calgary you could build a garage in your backyard with no building permit

for many of those years, there are many garages and fences that have been built over the years, perhaps, without proper surveying. So the hon. member’s point is taken, that even in an urban context, for a person with a piece of land, this piece of legislation on adverse possession may be relevant.

4:10

It’s quite interesting. There are multiple pieces of legislation that this has touched. As I understand it, the argument from the hon. member is that there are pieces of legislation to deal with scenarios where, say, for example, I built a garage in my backyard and just perhaps had a couple of inches in my neighbour’s yard due to a surveying error – or perhaps the house was even bought that way – and to deal with how the neighbours can deal with that and perhaps have some compensation there.

You know, I think this also counts if there’s a problem for real estate agents as well. Of course, he mentioned real property reports. Those are always quite good. I myself, having been in the house-hunting process for a while, you know, often look at pieces of property where there’s a shared driveway between two pieces of property. Instead of having a traditional driveway up to a garage in the front of the house or a garage in the rear, there’s actually a driveway between the two houses, which means, of course, that that driveway is half on somebody’s piece of property. That real property report is always quite interesting because, depending on where the houses are positioned, if one person or another wanted to put a fence on that driveway – I don’t know very many cars that are four feet wide, so that would potentially be problematic. I think it speaks to the importance of making sure that there are agreements between neighbours in this particular regard, specifically on how to deal with that when it comes to compensation.

I have to admit that this is something that, previous to this, I hadn’t thought much about. I know that our rural members, you know, from the story the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti brought up, do hear about this a lot more often. I have to admit that in my office it is something that no constituent has ever asked me about. That’s not to say that in the future they won’t, but through this debate I’m aiming to try and see things from both sides, for what may be pros for this, what cons there may be.

As we know, in this House several members always like to use the phrase about wanting to make sure that we examine these bills thoroughly to watch out for unintended consequences. You know, I think the history of politics in general, whether it be in this province or Canada or even at a city level, is rife with well-intentioned people who have missed something or didn’t see a particular outcome of what the legislation would do. You do something over here to fix a problem, and it creates problems a couple of pieces of legislation and regulations over, where it has a totally unexpected outcome.

You know, I think the hon. member made a very compelling case on the reasons for his bill. I can’t remember if it was the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek or for Grande Prairie-Wapiti who was talking about how, of course, this has come forward in the Resource Stewardship Committee. There was a suggestion that perhaps the issue is being buried.

I know that out of those motions that came from the Resource Stewardship Committee, the government requested expert analysis from the Alberta Law Reform Institute. They began that work in the fall of 2017. Of course, the Alberta Law Reform Institute – I’m probably just going to call it ALRI from now on so I don’t trip over that. You know, we went out and asked them for advice when this bill was introduced, and they told us, “While considerable work has been done, we are not yet in a position to make preliminary recommendations and to put those out for consultation with

stakeholders.” The institute went on to say, “To exempt claims to recover possession of land from the operation of the Limitations Act would be a significant change to Alberta law and one that should not be undertaken without thorough review.”

I don’t think the member who proposed this bill would disagree with that statement as, of course, it would be a major change. I haven’t had a chance to hear a fulsome debate. My first thoughts would be to let the ALRI complete their work to see what comes out of those changes. I know, of course, that this would touch on several areas. You know, we want to make sure this isn’t touching any other pieces of legislation.

I know the Wills and Succession Act, which came into effect in 2012, is an example of viable legislation that came from the ALRI. The ALRI’s work on reviewing adverse possession, you know, I believe, also included a review of private members’ bills that were brought forward in the House, and I believe it was a private member’s bill that was previous to this one here from Calgary-Fish Creek. They are actually reviewing approximately 50 Alberta cases that have been mentioned in adverse possession cases since 2000 to consider how these cases fit in with historical case law in this area and whether amendments to the Limitations Act would have led the law to go in a different direction if a piece of legislation were to pass. The work also includes a look at other jurisdictions and their dispute resolution mechanisms that act as a substitute for adverse possession. I believe the hon. member mentioned that in his opening statements.

Discussion of adverse possession, you know, usually focuses on boundary disputes due to human occupation intentionally, as was the story from Grande Prairie-Wapiti, or, of course, by human error. As we know, in our suburban areas sometimes people build garages and wells and such without doing a survey first, and sometimes as a result stuff happens. But there can also be natural boundary changes where no person is at fault for trespass, and I would think that the law would need to accommodate both instances.

Abolishing adverse possession, just from my research on this, may require amendments to various pieces of legislation, including the Law of Property Act, the Land Titles Act as well as a review of related legislation such as the Municipal Government Act and the Public Lands Act to ensure, as I mentioned previously, that there are no unintended consequences. You know, my understanding is that that is part of the work the ALRI is undertaking. Transitional issues, of course, would need to be considered such as how to deal with existing rights and claims of owners or occupiers that would perhaps currently be in progress at that time.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and speak to the bill this afternoon. I’m a little bit surprised, to be totally up front with you. Of course, I’m always up front with you, but I’m very, very shocked to hear my colleague from the other side of the world, by the sounds of things, express such concern about the potential of the unintended consequences and how this really isn’t an issue in the city but more so in rural Alberta when my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek has a constituent who – I don’t know if you were following along at home – is from the city and not, in fact, from rural Alberta. I think that if the hon. member from across the way was listening, he would have heard that this individual, at significant cost, lost 1,000 square feet of his urban property.

This is not just an issue that affects rural Alberta but, in fact, affects urban Alberta as well. While I can appreciate that the member perhaps hasn’t had any of his constituents who have come

in and addressed this issue specifically with him, this is a significant issue. Madam Speaker, the very interesting thing about this particular piece of legislation is that while it may not be a widespread problem, although it is certainly larger than people would expect it to be, for the people that it does affect, it has a significant and negative impact on those people.

4:20

We have fallen drastically behind many other jurisdictions on this issue of adverse possession, and it is outrageous that the government continues to drag their feet on this particular issue. You know, I think, Madam Speaker, this government has had such a lengthy record of doing one thing and saying another. Today, by all accounts, it certainly sounds like the government members are going to blame the ALRI and say: we need to wait for them to complete their work.

Madam Speaker, for extended periods of time members of this government used to claim that they supported property rights, so much so that in the much-celebrated platform of the NDP, which, I might add, had a few small challenges in it, including when they anticipated that the budget would be balanced . . .

An Hon. Member: It didn’t have a carbon tax.

Mr. Cooper: The other small challenge that they may have had was that they didn’t include significant things in it like, say, the single largest tax increase in Alberta’s history in the form of the carbon tax, but don’t worry about those small, little challenges.

Members of that government and, in fact, the Premier herself as well as the Minister of Transportation, the Government House Leader, at one point in time had a commitment to property rights, so much so that they wrote it into their platform in the form of 5.30: “We will strengthen landowners’ rights.” Madam Speaker, you’ll remember that the hon. member from Wetaskiwin, in his very first opportunity to bring important business before the Assembly, brought a motion on property rights. What has happened since then from this government is exactly nothing. We’ve heard them talk, talk, talk, talk with no action. What we have in the form of this NDP government is a government that says one thing and does another, and that is exactly what’s taking place this afternoon in the form of property rights.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that you will remember that during the debate around Bill 204, that was moved by my colleague for Livingstone-Macleod, the Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Transportation, rose in his place and expressed significant support for this particular clause, the removal of adverse possession from the law in the province of Alberta. Now, that particular piece of legislation did a number of things, which, I might add, the government used to pretend that they supported. That was fair and equal compensation and a whole bunch of other issues that were particularly associated with Bill 28, Bill 50 – anyway, I’m sure that you are very aware of all of these things – that many people from all across the province had significant concerns about at that time. So my colleague for Livingstone-Macleod endeavoured to correct a whole bunch of those problems that still exist today.

The Government House Leader, to his credit, rose and said: “Listen, a number of these clauses” – I’m paraphrasing here – “are problematic, and we are unable to move forward on them at present, but we do support the removal of adverse possession.” He went so far as to say that if this particular piece of legislation was only a piece of legislation on adverse possession, in fact, he would potentially encourage private members of the government to then support that piece of legislation.

So what do we see? The member from Foothills addressing that exact problem. Peeled back from the legislation are all of those other significant concerns that many members on this side of the House still have. Sometimes, Madam Speaker, you know that politics is the art of the possible, so he, the wise young man that he is, in addressing significant concerns of many people from all across Alberta, rural or urban, brought forward to the House today a very reasonable piece of legislation that is possible.

Yet it sounds like government members are going to hide behind Bill 204, Bill 201, committee delays, and now the Justice department, who has done absolutely zero in terms of reporting back to the Legislature on the good member from Wetaskiwin's response on his motion. Now they're saying: oh, well, we've kicked the can down to the ALRI, and we should just really wait until we get feedback. Well, I don't understand what's better feedback that members on that side of the House need to receive than from the Premier, who has supported this in the past, from the Minister of Transportation, who as recently as just a couple of sessions ago supported the importance of property rights.

Again, it blows my mind how the government can be such a say one thing, do another government. They say that property rights are important, but their actions indicate to rural Albertans, to urban Albertans, who have these significant concerns, that they don't want to do anything about property rights, and it is my belief that that's exactly what we're going to see on this piece of legislation today or whenever it should pass second reading or likely fail at second reading, whether it's this week or next.

It is more than just a little disappointing because, I believe, Madam Speaker, Albertans actually were hoping for something different from this government, but what they are getting is more of the same. That's a government that implements the largest tax increase in Alberta's history without telling anyone about it prior. When they've said that they want to do something, their actions are the exact opposite. This isn't what Albertans expect of this government. It's one of the many reasons why the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, when they come to my office to express their displeasure with this government, are so anxious for the opportunity to send a Conservative government to Edmonton. One thing that the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have been clear with me about is that this government hasn't listened to them, and they certainly, it appears, are not listening to the good folks who are in the gallery today who have their concerns.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise and speak to a bill that is the subject matter of my career's work in the real estate industry, and I do take some exception to some claims from members opposite that this caucus is not respectful of and not defenders of property rights in this province. You won't find a more committed defender of private property rights than this member speaking right now, having spent 30 years in the real estate industry defending those rights and establishing those rights for my clients. I'm really very happy to see the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek speak so eloquently in defence of our current Torrens land registry system because it is indeed, truly, the best system of land registration in the world.

Originally established in Australia, actually, it is a system which ensures that title is indefeasible, and that's one of the principles that is enshrined in the Torrens system. While the members opposite I think rightfully suggest that adverse possession is an affront to that indefeasibility, I think that we still need to respectfully follow the processes in place right now to ensure that the ALRI finalizes its

work so that in making a determination as to which direction to go on this issue, we can make sure that there's an adequate dispute resolution mechanism in place.

4:30

I know that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek did identify that, in his opinion, the dispute resolution mechanisms were sufficient already should this bill proceed and the legislation be adopted, but I think the process by which we've invoked the services of the Alberta Law Reform Institute is one that we should follow. I know it's time consuming and it has taken a bit more time than one would have hoped, but it's a situation that I think we should approach carefully, because I know that the land registration system that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek speaks so highly of is one that we should protect and even consider strengthening over time.

For those that don't really know about it, I'll just briefly say that the Torrens title system operates on the principle of title by registration, granting the high indefeasibility of a registered ownership rather than the registration of title. The system does away with the need for providing a chain of title, as is common in many jurisdictions even in Canada or particularly in Quebec, which comes to mind, where you have to sometimes go to different parishes to find actual physical documents of title deeds to verify title and verify the subsequent sales of the property, one after another, to actually show that that chain of titles belongs to you rightfully and that you actually own the land.

The Torrens system does away with that need to prove a chain of title. The state, the province in this case, guarantees the title, and it's usually supported, as is stated, by a compensation scheme for those who lose their title due to private fraud or error in the state's operation. In most jurisdictions there are some portions of land which are still unregistered, but the Torrens system has three basic principles that it works under. The mirror principle: the registry reflects or mirrors accurately and completely the current facts about the title to each registered lot. This means that each dealing affecting a lot such as a transfer of title, a mortgage or discharge of the same, or a lease, an easement, or a covenant must be entered onto the register and so be viewable by a relatively inexpensive online search. That's one of the beauties of our Torrens system registration and the SPIN 2 government of Alberta website, that it's easily accessible at fairly low cost to individuals wanting to verify what the title registration is actually on a particular parcel of land, and it's government guaranteed.

That system is something that I think is under attack in other parts of Canada, where there is consideration to actually privatize that situation, the land registrations service. I think that in this province we can tell the world that that is a system of government land registration that we're going to protect here because it is fundamentally a right of Albertans, one that is enshrined in our human psyche in this province, that private property is sacrosanct and that registration of that private property should be held in public hands and not disseminated to a private company that may not have the same guarantees or the same abilities to guarantee the privacy of that information and the accuracy of it and the verifiability of that information.

So I'll always defend the Torrens system of land registration that we have in this province and the SPIN 2 accessibility to that information that we have on that government website. I really hope that we as a government will look to perhaps register other things within that SPIN 2 system that could rightfully belong there and be accessible to Albertans, whether it be, perhaps, vital statistics or other government information that we want the public to have ready access to and to have good verifiability at a reasonable cost and hopefully in the not-too-distant future on a 24/7 basis.

The Torrens system of registration is something that we're very, very fortunate to have in place here in Alberta. Most jurisdictions in the world would give their eye teeth to have the public registration of land title established in the way that we do in Alberta. Other jurisdictions, I believe Saskatchewan as well, operate under the Torrens system, British Columbia, too. It is something that we should always do our best to protect.

There's another principle in the Torrens system of land registration called the curtain principle. It says that one does not need to go behind the certificate of title as it contains all the information about the title. This means that ownership does not need to be proved by a long, complicated document that is kept by the owner, as in a private conveyancing system, that you'll find in the United States, where title deed companies will search title. It costs quite a bit of money, in a lot of cases, to actually go through successive documents, that may or may not be properly stored and accessible, to prove that you have the right to sell the property and that you indeed own it and can convey title to a new owner. There's a title deed insurance situation that takes place there that may protect the buyer, to compensate them in case of defects in that chain of evidence. But here the guarantor is the province. The state guarantees the veracity of title, so all the necessary information regarding ownership is on the certificate of title.

As indicated also by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, the indemnity principle, the third principle of the system of land registration we have in Alberta, the Torrens system, provides for compensation of loss caused by private fraud or errors made by the register of title. That situation is in place and is one that we should protect forcefully and never let go because once it's gone into private hands, it's gone forever. It's a real jewel, that we have the public system of land registration in Alberta.

The thing that we want to make sure of when we do look at the piece of legislation at hand, the private member's bill, is that before we decide upon whether or not to go ahead with it, we must make sure that the dispute resolution mechanisms are fully in place. I can think of situations many times over where there were difficulties with structures, in particular, on a piece of property that I had listed for sale or that a client of mine was looking to make an offer on or perhaps had even made an offer on subject to verification of compliance and so forth.

Most of the issues that you find, as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti alluded to, are more rural situations. But what I do take a bit of an exception to is the allusion that perhaps urban members don't have the facility to comprehend what the rural situation might entail. In fact, many of the rural situations that a real estate agent or a land sale might encompass are fairly straightforward. They usually involve somebody having made a mistake.

One situation in particular I dealt with not too many years ago was a situation where an individual property owner had an acreage property and wanted to sell the property, list it for sale. He actually just let it slip that there was a well on his property. I thought that, well, maybe this was one of those abandoned well situations, like a water well that was no longer in use on an old homestead. But, no, it was a real well.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 204, the Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. I'm trying to learn more about this bill, and I was paying attention to hear from my colleagues on the other side if there was any reason

why they oppose it. I haven't got there yet. I didn't quite understand whether they support it or oppose it. But I rise to speak in support of this bill, particularly when my fellow Calgarians are sitting in the gallery and want to listen to both sides of the aisle, the reasons why they oppose or support. I haven't heard that very clearly from both NDP members who spoke prior to me.

Madam Speaker, I was born and raised in India. There were lots of civil cases on property rights. I was sitting here and wondering. You know, I came to Canada thinking that here there is no chance that someone else can claim your property. It seems that it's a reality based on the examples given by both the members for Calgary-Fish Creek and Grande Prairie-Wapiti. That scares me to death. That means that my hard-earned money, that I put into investments in acquiring properties here, also might be at risk of being lost. I mean, that makes me think twice, to do even more research on that, which I'm going to do.

4:40

But today I want to talk about a few examples. The way I understood it is that in the past when people came early and if they stayed on the Queen's Crown land for 10 years, then it became theirs. But now adverse possession, better known as squatters' rights, where Alberta, you know, ran into trouble, also applies to private property. I didn't know that till the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek informed us, me particularly; others might know. Madam Speaker, just think of all the NDP world travellers scrambling to set up tents on the lawns of the homes of NDP members of the Legislature in order to ensure that in 10 years the lawn belongs to the squatters. How do they feel about that?

In 2012 former member Ken Allred – I think he was from St. Albert – brought forward a private member's bill which would have abolished adverse possession, and the bill received second reading and died on the Order Paper. In 2014 the Property Rights Advocate recommended that adverse possession be abolished. They made this recommendation because, in their view, abolishing adverse possession would strengthen the integrity of the land registry system and the reliability of the land title records. The 2014 report suggested introducing and passing the legislation previously brought forward by Mr. Allred.

In February 2016 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship reviewed the 2014 report from the outgoing Property Rights Advocate, Lee Cutforth. Like the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti mentioned before, the NDP used their majority on the committee to refer the matter to the Department of Justice. We are not aware of any review having ever been initiated by the Department of Justice.

Would the Minister of Justice like to have some squatters on her property? I don't think so. But why is she wavering on this bill? We don't know. The government of Alberta has this beautiful building in downtown Calgary called McDougall Centre. If memory serves, I think a camper trailer can get pulled onto that lawn, too. It's big enough.

In February 2017 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship again revisited the recommendations from the Property Rights Advocate, and the committee recommended that the government should abolish adverse possession. A motion was unanimously passed by the committee recommending that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta legislation. To date this has not been acted upon by this NDP government.

That's why we are here today with Bill 204. The Official Opposition is here to help the government. In their election manifesto they said that they support property rights. When they

became government, they forgot about that, so we are here as the Official Opposition to remind them and help them to act on what they said they would do.

Adverse possession is an archaic law which needs to be abolished to protect the rights of property owners in Alberta. This is not the era of Rupert's Land, with the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company trading furs where the property title didn't exist. I know the Member for Edmonton-McClung, who happens to be the subject matter expert, is trying to educate us . . .

Mr. Gill: No, he's not. He's a realtor.

Mr. Panda: Yeah, but it seems he knows something about this. But he still didn't convince me that squatters can, you know, claim the property of private owners.

We're now the modern province of Alberta, with proper laws and a proper land title registry, which we agree with him on, and allowing an individual to intentionally or unintentionally possess the property of another individual without compensation for the original owner flies in the face of basic property rights. As I said, Madam Speaker, that really scared me, that in a western democracy like Canada it can happen. I couldn't imagine that.

This is an issue that spans the urban-rural divide. It's not urban-rural. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek mentioned about what happened in Calgary in an urban area, too. We know of the people parking trailers in the yards of rental properties, and the landowner cannot evict the people living in the trailer or remove the trailer from the lot. It's time to abolish adverse possession. What would the Premier do if a tent city decided to set up on the south lawn of the Legislature and claim squatters' rights? It's a possibility. If we don't act on this, anybody can take advantage of that. We have seen tent cities set up in cities around the world, even in major European cities, in very public areas and common-use parks in the heart of those cities. You can be sure adverse possession has been extinguished to present land claims in those countries. Do we still need adverse possession here? It invites tent cities to form in public areas where we don't want people living; we want common-use space.

Madam Speaker, I would actually thank my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing in this Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. It's time to do the right thing and end squatters' rights in Alberta. It's time that we protect property owners and protect their rights.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills talked about the Government House Leader and the Premier, that in the past they said that they'll stand up for the rights of Alberta property owners. This is the time, then. They have to put their money where their mouth is. He also illustrated the NDP election manifesto, where they said that they'll protect property rights. Here is your opportunity. I ask all members, on both sides of the aisle, to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this important bill forward to this House. It's my pleasure to be able to speak to it.

Back in 2015, during the campaign for the election, I was in a debate with some other colleagues, and it was a question-and-answer period. A question was asked about squatter rights. I knew a little bit about squatter rights. I hadn't heard of specific examples, but they talked to us about this situation where an individual had

nicely given a neighbour some land to be able to use. It wasn't a lot, but it was some land that they just lent. After 10 years they had tried to figure out some stuff, compensation, being able to work it out, but what happened was that the two gentlemen weren't able to work out some kind of a compensation package. This actually hit the news, that the squatter, as I guess we would call him, decided that they had been there for 10 years and deserved it.

4:50

What's interesting about this case is that they asked: what would you do if you were in government? There was an NDP person there, someone from the Alberta Party, someone from the PC Party, and someone from the Wildrose Party. I happened to be the last person on this panel. From each one, as they were asked the question, the answers were: well, you know, we would have to take a look at the situation and really study it closely, and we'd have to figure it out. This is what I've been hearing so far from the government side of the House, that we'd have to take a look at different aspects and the different nuances of the situation and find out – you know what? When it came to me, Madam Speaker, I said: absolutely, we need to get rid of this law.

This is a terrible law because the reality is that – and it was actually stated in this article, and I brought it here today so I could kind of review it – the person who owned the land was paying the property tax on it. This was not a rich farmer. This wasn't a rich person. The person actually paid hard-earned money to buy this land, which I believe was about 10 acres, and paid taxes for this land over the 16 years that they had owned it, and 10 of those years happened to be with this person that they just out of the goodness of their heart decided to let use, and this person took advantage of it, Madam Speaker. Took advantage of it.

Now, since this time there was another situation that came up. Another guy came into my office, just probably about six months ago, and he said: I have this guy who's in one of my rental properties; he's decided to build a little squatter cabin on a flatbed trailer, and he won't leave, and he claims squatter rights. Now, he wanted to be closer to his ex-girlfriend, that actually had left the premises. But because he had been there not more than 10 years – I guess he didn't really understand the full extent of the law, but he was claiming that he deserved because of squatter rights the right to be able to stay in this location. This landlord had the opportunity to bring the police even to try and escort him off. He used the plea: I have the rights under squatter rights; you can't do anything to me. Now, luckily, this landlord was able to take him to court and \$127 later was able to evict him.

The problem is that there will be people that are using this adverse possession law to their advantage even when they don't deserve it or even though the law doesn't apply to them. This ambiguity is really setting a bad precedent in helping people who have not actually earned something to be able to have it. This is the sort of thing that drives Albertans crazy.

The other thing that I wanted to just quickly say, Madam Speaker, is that it almost seems in this situation that, you know, if it didn't happen in my backyard, then I don't really care about it. That's almost like what I'm hearing from the members opposite: it doesn't really matter; it didn't happen to me. But you know what? I can guarantee you that if it had happened to them in their own backyard, I question whether or not they would be standing on the side they're standing on. I highly doubt it. In fact, I would imagine that they would be fighting against the squatter rights law. They would say: "You know what? This is unfair. I worked hard to be able to buy this property. It is mine. I've paid taxes for it. I should be able to have and use that land." Instead, what we're hearing is this idea that

— you know what? — we’ve got to check these nuances out; we’ve got to check this out. Meanwhile people are still using this plea of squatter rights.

I wanted to bring those two cases up. The court case actually went in the favour of the squatter for the 10 acres. In the other case they were able to work it out where, you know, the landowner was able to get rid of this guy and he couldn’t use the plea of squatter rights.

So I am very much in favour of this private member’s bill, put forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and I would hope that just common sense would dictate the way that members on both sides of this aisle will vote on this and that they would ask themselves, first of all: if it was me, if I was the one that this was affecting, how would I vote?

With that, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I’ve been actually anxiously hoping that I would be given some time to speak to this bill.

I was actually really intrigued by the debate that was initiated by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and then followed through by members on our side as well as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, but I have to say that I was dismayed at the comments of the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I have rarely heard in this institution a less reasoned and logical presentation. I mean, the idea that somebody could set up a food truck or a tent on the grounds of the McDougall building in Calgary and, just by being there for 10 years, assume possession just is preposterous. I mean, within 10 minutes the Calgary Police Service would be there hauling away the trailer or whatever it is.

The same would go for the suggestion that that would happen here on the Legislature Grounds. I mean, really, come on. I don’t know how many thousands of dollars this hour of debate is taking, but to consume it with that kind of drivel is really, really, really beyond the pale. I don’t care if the member didn’t grow up in this environment and understand the purpose of the Torrens land title system, but let’s get real here.

The other thing that amazes me is that those folks across the way, who have two legacy predecessors, the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta and the Wildrose Party of Alberta, have joined together in this so-called United Conservatives, but they really are the same thing as those legacies. Just talking about the Wildrose, I mean, scratch a Wildrose, and you’ll find a Socred. Those Socreds actually were in power from the time of Aberhart, in the ’30s, until Lougheed took over in I guess it was the ’70s.

An Hon. Member: In ’71.

Dr. Turner: In ’71. Thank you.

It was before I got to Alberta, but, you know, I have so-called enjoyed a Conservative government in this province since I came here, in 1977, and I am very happy to be now governed by folks like our Government House Leader and our Premier, who have a real appreciation for property rights and for the rule of law and a respect for institutions of this government such as the Alberta Law Reform Institute.

Now, the Alberta Law Reform Institute is looking at this problem, and it’s taking them some time, but that Law Reform Institute is also doing lots of good work for us Albertans. For instance, it’s looking at informal public appeals. With all of the interest now in GoFundMe campaigns, the Alberta Law Reform Institute is actually helping the government set up the framework in

which these informal charitable appeals can be made and how we can make sure that they are being run in the proper way.

The Alberta Evidence Act, a pretty important piece of legislation: that’s also before the Alberta Law Reform Institute. And we have a lot of interest in nonprofit corporations. I guess that would tie into the informal public appeals. It isn’t as though the Alberta Law Reform Institute is sort of wasting its time and forgetting about this very, very important issue.

The other thing. I’m not a lawyer, and I certainly don’t have the experience of my colleague . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt you, hon. member, but the time for consideration of this item of business is now concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Fiscal Management Policies and Practices

503. Dr. Starke moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to amend its fiscal management policies and practices and introduce any necessary legislation to ensure that revenue from fees, levies, specific taxes, and fines goes directly to support the program and service areas requiring those fees, levies, specific taxes, and fines to be collected and is not deposited into the general revenue fund.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure this afternoon to introduce debate on Motion 503. What does all that mean? Well, in Motions Other than Government Motions we can have an open discussion about a number of different topics, and in this case the discussion is going to be about taxation.

Now, there’s always been a lot of discussion about taxation going back through history, and the arguments continue to this day. We have to ask ourselves questions like: why do governments levy taxes in the first place? What about fees, levies, fines, and other sources of government revenue? What is their purpose? Should taxes and taxation policy be used as a lever to change human behaviour, and is that indeed effective in doing so?

To focus today’s discussion, I want to look at one of the fundamental challenges we face as legislators today, and that is that people don’t like taxes. Now, it’s been said that the only popular tax is the one that someone else has to pay. One of the reasons that people don’t like taxes is that there is a disconnect between the payment of the tax and the benefit derived. We live in a transactional society where we regularly exchange funds for a specified good or service. We make many decisions about those transactions, choosing, for example, to purchase an item with a greater perceived value and being prepared to pay more for it.

But taxes don’t work that way. We pay taxes in a wide variety of ways, but the connection to what we receive as citizens in return for those levied funds is tenuous at best. This is especially true when the revenue from taxation is not earmarked for specific purposes; rather, it goes into general revenue.

Now, there is a widespread belief that as elected officials we are not faithful and trustworthy stewards of those funds. Anyone who has been placed in a position of public trust and trust over the public purse should exercise that duty as a sacred trust. In fact, 200 years ago the fifth president of the United States, James Monroe, said to the joint houses of the U.S. Congress: “To impose taxes when the public exigencies require them is an obligation of the most sacred character, especially with a free people.” People just don’t talk that way anymore. It’s a shame.

We have all heard the examples of wasteful expenditure, and it is completely understandable that the taxpayers who have contributed to those general revenues are upset. We should all be. It has prompted us to introduce various safeguards and accountability mechanisms in an attempt to eliminate these cases of imprudent spending. But even in these instances taxpayers have reason to question the stewardship of those dollars. The recent investigation by the federal Auditor General, Michael Ferguson, into Senate expenditures found some 30 instances of inappropriate expenditures totalling just under \$1 million. Now, that's certainly serious and should not be minimized in any way, but the cost of the two-year audit to find those expenditures was some \$23.6 million. Canadian taxpayers shelled out \$24 for every dollar of inappropriate expenditure that was uncovered. Now, the mechanisms that we put in place to monitor the spending of taxpayer dollars all come at a cost. While there is a perception that these mechanisms will save the taxpayer by curtailing wasteful or inappropriate expenditure, they often end up costing more than they save.

So what am I suggesting? Some of the taxes, levies, fees, and fines that the government collects are related specifically to a purpose or, at the very least, those that pay the taxes can be connected to a related expenditure. For example, the tourism levy, what some people call the pillow tax, is a 4 per cent charge added to your hotel bill when you stay in a fixed-roof accommodation anywhere in Alberta. Now, when it was first devised, in 2005, the intent was that the levy would be used to fund the promotion of tourism in Alberta, and it did. For many years every dollar collected by the tourism levy was reinvested into the promotion of Alberta as a tourist destination through Travel Alberta and the tourism ministry. Not a single penny of taxpayer dollars went to pay for tourism efforts in Alberta, and the ministry was indeed self-funding. Since about 50 per cent of the tourism levy was collected from nonresidents of Alberta, we had devised a way to have those visiting our province help to further promote it as a tourism destination. Now, this model was so successful that it became a template for nearly every Canadian province which now has a similar tourism levy in place.

Sadly, the current government has chosen to siphon revenue from the tourism levy into general revenue. Some 30 per cent of the levy now flows into government coffers as general revenue, and despite its insistence that this government supports tourism as a key driver of economic diversification, this government has cut funding to tourism in each of its years in office.

Now, my argument is simple. Take the full amount of the tourism levy and use it to fund the operations of the tourism ministry and Travel Alberta. Given that every dollar spent in this way used to return \$19.50 to the Alberta treasury in various other forms of revenue – and we don't know what that number is now because they've stopped measuring it – that would seem to be a good investment.

Well, let's look at another example. The Alberta government collects just under a billion dollars annually in tobacco taxes, and we know that these tobacco-related costs to our health care system number in the billions of dollars every year. Yet Alberta Health spends only \$4 million each year on tobacco reduction initiatives. That's less than half of 1 per cent of tobacco tax revenue. If we were to specifically earmark, say, 2 per cent of tobacco tax revenue to a robust tobacco reduction strategy, which we actually already have in place if this government would ever get around to proclaiming and acting on it, just think of the kinds of savings in both reduced human suffering and lower health care costs that we could glean.

Sometimes it's a matter of more closely tying revenues that already exist to existing expenditures. For example, the government collects \$1.4 billion each year in provincial fuel excise taxes. Now,

according to Budget 2018 numbers the Ministry of Transportation is investing some \$1.2 billion in capital projects this year. If those two numbers were more closely tied together and it was clearly explained that the excise taxes are going to fund capital expenditures on roadways and bridges, I would suggest that the acceptance level would at least rise to a level of begrudging. But as it is currently, I hear the complaints every day.

Madam Speaker, there are many other examples, from camping fees in our provincial parks, which are far too low, to fees charged for basic services from our registry offices, where our government takes in revenue but that there is little or no connection to the cost of the service provided. Every time we charge a fee for a service that does not cover the full cost of providing that service, that service is receiving a subsidy from the taxpayer. Unless we can establish that providing that subsidy is in the greater public good and is therefore worthy of support from general revenue, we should seriously consider changing the fee structure to move more toward a cost-recovery model for providing that service.

Now, what this motion suggests is that we establish a more direct link between the fees, charges, levies, and taxes that Albertans pay for the services that we require. Albertans do care about this issue. Just look at their reaction to the government's recent announcement that, contrary to what had been promised before, the additional \$20 per tonne in carbon tax that will be levied starting in 2021 and again in 2022 will now go into general revenue. Whatever happened to the promise that every dollar collected would go either into rebates, tax reductions, or initiatives to combat climate change? Your attempts to call the last \$20 of the carbon tax as the federal tax while the first \$30 was the provincial carbon tax: well, Minister, nobody is believing you.

There will always be a need for funds to flow into general revenue, and the government has many sources of revenue that would qualify. We have \$11 billion in personal income tax, \$4 billion in corporate income tax, roughly \$3 billion in investment income, and \$4 billion from nonrenewable resource revenue. Interestingly, that totals \$22 billion, roughly the same as the Health department's 2018 budget. So the next time you're having a coffee shop discussion with folks about provincial spending, you could point out that the Health department, roughly 40 per cent of our government's budget expenditures, would take every penny in income taxes, both corporate and personal, resource royalty revenues, plus investment income. The question then becomes: what do we use to pay for the other 60 per cent? The total list of revenue sources can be found in our budgetary documents.

5:10

Madam Speaker, if taxes are indeed a certainty – and as Benjamin Franklin said, the only two certain things in life are death and taxes – and if we are to be good and faithful stewards of not just tax dollars but of all of the funds entrusted to us by Albertans, I think it behooves us to make the best possible use of those funds to minimize wasteful or unnecessary spending but also to demonstrate clearly to the people of Alberta, where possible, the connections between revenue and expenditure.

I look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I also would like to rise on this topic and thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing this forward for discussion. I do rise today, however, to speak against this motion. Our government is making life more affordable for Albertans across a number of ways.

We've done work over the last three years to reduce costs for Albertans where possible.

Some of those examples, Madam Speaker, where we are doing that, reducing costs and therefore utilizing tax monies in other ways to address the needs Albertans have, are that we're reducing costs in school fees, for example. We reduced that to ensure that Albertans could afford to send their kids to school to receive world-class public education, something we gladly as citizens want to know that our tax dollars go to in terms of enhancing the education of our children.

In addition, we've grown Alberta's tax advantage over the next lowest taxed jurisdiction. Now that advantage stands at \$11.2 billion over the province of British Columbia. If we were to have the same taxes as B.C., all Albertans and their corporations, companies both small and large, would have to pony up another \$11.2 billion. We have kept the tax advantage in this province strong by making sure that we are not the highest taxed jurisdiction in this country and among the lowest by \$11.2 billion.

We've also done incredibly good work at bringing down the cost of government, Madam Speaker. There was a tremendous amount of bloat in the system as a result of the 44 years of Conservative rule, and we have cut salaries for Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions and the perks that those CEOs, in many cases, would have received. We've cut perks like golf memberships that were simply out of line with the expectations of Albertans and what they expect their public servants to receive in compensation. We froze management salaries, political salaries, MLA salaries, and those last two, political staff and MLAs, were frozen immediately upon this government being put in place. That will last until the end of this term. We've achieved several practical labour agreements with teachers, nurses, allied health professionals, and others.

Specifically to this motion and why I want to note that it's out of step with every provincial jurisdiction in this country is that Alberta's tax revenue collected and investment policies are in line with provincial legislation and Supreme Court decisions. This includes ensuring that compulsory fees reflect the cost of providing certain services, and we have done that and are onside with that.

Certain ministries levy fees for various things, and others do not, Madam Speaker. If the government were to place restrictions or parameters on funding from specific revenue streams to fund only specific programs or services, there would be far less money for vital public services like health care and education, where we don't levy a great number of fees. They are paid through the general revenue fund for the most part, and that is aligned with identifying what the needs of those areas are and then providing monies for them.

I'm deeply concerned that shifting to the model proposed by this speaker would encourage more fees to be levied to cover costs and increase costs for Albertans. That would not make life more affordable for Albertans, Madam Speaker. This motion would shift government's incentive from providing high-quality services to increasing or creating fees to provide for those services.

With regard to our fiscal accountability and transparency, Madam Speaker, our approach to budgeting certainly receives high marks from the C.D. Howe Institute. For the third year running, Alberta has received a consecutive A plus rating for its fiscal accountability. Under the three final terms of the previous government, which some members on that side were involved in, they received a B and two Cs. Our rating is three A pluses. The previous government in '14, '13, and '12 received C, C, and B.

I'm proud of the work we've done to ensure fiscal accountability and transparency when we release budgets and quarterly reporting and other ways that government provides updates to the budget.

Albertans expect such transparency from their government, and I'm pleased to say that we've been able to deliver, thanks in very large part to the excellent work done by the public servants in the Treasury Board and Finance department and across government by the SFOs.

Again I'd like to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing this forward. I won't be supporting it because it would reduce funding that goes to many vital programs and services that Albertans rely on.

With regard to the pillow tax, or the hospitality 4 per cent charge, that was changed by the previous government. We have not made the change to any of the kinds of things that were brought forward.

I want to also say that we're going to continue to be the fiscally transparent government that we have shown in the last three years, far different than the previous government, where they separated everything. They had savings, they had investments, they had operational spending, and they were offside with our own AG as well. He kept saying that they don't consolidate their budgets, that they're going the wrong way. We've changed that. We're onside with the AG as well as, of course, the C.D. Howe Institute.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I want to start by thanking the hon. member, my hon. colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster, for bringing forth Motion 503. I will absolutely be supporting it. I like so much about the direction of this motion, that would like to help the government.

Let's start with a little bit about the situation we're in, why some more value for tax dollars is essential, and where we're at with spending, debt, and taxes. Of course, this government immediately upon being elected increased our corporate tax 20 per cent. Madam Speaker, when I talk to oil and gas companies and good agriculture companies and other companies around the province about the hardships and the layers and layers of burden that this government has added with labour changes, with caps on emissions, with carbon taxes, more often than not it comes back to how that 20 per cent increase in the corporate tax did more to drive investment and to drive jobs out of Canada, out of Alberta. The lack of accountability, the lack of foresight as to where this government is going is connected to that.

When Albertans realize that this government has gone from \$13 billion in debt three years ago to \$56 billion in debt today, headed towards \$96 billion or a hundred billion by 2023 – personally, I think that's a low estimate. We've seen the Finance minister three times, when he's had a complete budget cycle, be a billion to a billion and a half dollars over budget. How will that continue?

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster spoke very, very well about the tourism levy and the fact that initially it was targeted to help the industry, and now a huge, huge percentage of that is just dumped into general revenue. Madam Speaker, that reminds me of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, number 6, where taxpayers "have the right to complete, accurate, clear, and timely information" – complete, accurate, clear, and timely information – as to where their money is going. Of course, they're not receiving this when it's dumped into general revenue.

5:20

That reminds me probably of what I've heard the most in six years of sitting in this House. With Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health now at \$22 billion, taxpayers wonder: does anyone

in the government, does anybody in Alberta Health have any idea what services cost us? All we know is that it goes up annually between 4 and a half per cent and 6 and a half per cent. At the same time tax revenue is declining because of the NDP's managed decline of our economy because of their increase in tax rates.

Madam Speaker, I believe that if this government were to adopt the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's Motion 503 and actually implement it, this discipline could actually spread into some cost control as well and add some value and effectiveness measures to where these hard-earned tax dollars go. When it doesn't happen, it builds frustration. Hopefully, it doesn't build too much noncompliance, because Albertans are good people, but certainly what it does build is people looking for tax efficiency, people looking to make their investments outside of Alberta, where they know what future tax rates are going to be, where they know what future spending is going to be, where they know that there'll be more certainty in their return on investment.

It's important to get this right right now when we look at the environment that we're in. This government brags continually about how we are still, you know, the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada even though they've changed that considerably, even though what we're facing today is an American government that has reduced corporate taxes by 40 per cent – 40 per cent – at the same time that they've increased them by 20 per cent. Where is that going to lead investment to? What is that going to make happen? When capital has the ability to be placed anywhere around the world to create jobs and create wealth that governments and programs can tax, when this is what the real world is – when investors and wealth funds in the real world, Madam Speaker, have the option of deciding where they invest, they look for consistency, they look for return, and they look for certainty.

Madam Speaker, that leads me to this government and their carbon tax. We all remember when we were told time and time again that it was revenue neutral. That was the weirdest, most incomplete, most inconsistent definition of revenue neutral I have ever seen. Time and time again we've heard in this House and around Alberta how much hardship this tax has caused. We have seen and heard, of course, senior citizens associations that have difficulty, school boards that have to rob Peter to pay Paul because of higher transportation costs, municipalities that are faced with higher taxes. Now we know, as we've heard in this House many times, that when Justin Trudeau says that in 2023 it's time for the tax to be raised 67 per cent, the fallacy of revenue neutral is completely thrown out the window by this NDP government, and 67 per cent of that increase is just going to be dumped into general revenues.

Madam Speaker, it's no wonder taxpayers out there are concerned about value for their tax dollars. It's no wonder they're concerned about big debt and big deficits. It's no wonder they're concerned about future generations. My goodness, the report I spoke about today in question period by the University of Calgary: can you imagine being 33 or 35 years old and knowing that already in just three years your share of the interest on the debt that this NDP government has run up is \$50,000? That's a truck. That's a down payment for a house. That's charitable giving to help your community, to go somewhere where Albertans have been great givers. Instead, it's dumped into the highest spending per capita government in all of Canada, where citizens know, with health care as an example, that access to a waiting list is not access to health care.

Madam Speaker, I look at younger people, the people 16 years old, and they're faced with a \$42,000 tax bill just on the interest, and that is before we consider that this government and their ally

Justin Trudeau have raised personal taxes to as high as 49 per cent. Can you imagine how much wealth creation that's driven out of Alberta? Can you imagine how much of that money is now being invested in another country, in another jurisdiction, that we could have taxed for health care, that we could have taxed for education, that we could have taxed for the needy in our society and those that need a temporary hand up?

Madam Speaker, I'm going to close with, you know, that this government has shown time and time again that their preference is to do things based on ideology, whether it's own laundry services publicly, long-term beds, rather than to respect how hard many Albertans work to create jobs, to create wealth, and how much risk...

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and discuss the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's Motion 503. I'm pleased that the member has brought forward this common-sense motion and hope that the government does take this to heart.

As I took a look at the motion, there are a lot of, in my opinion, good, best-practice ideas in there. The one part, though, that I actually am not sure of in terms of logistics, to be able to make it work, is not depositing it into general revenue funds. I think you could still probably take it and you could deliver it into general revenue funds, but you'd have to make sure that you know where the money is going to, where it's coming from. I think you could still work that same way.

Other than that, I think that this is a very common-sense motion that asks the government to think about the idea of best practice and, more importantly, to think about the concept of transparency. Now, even though this government thinks that everything they're doing is transparent – and the Finance minister did get up and say that they've received better grades for the work that they've done in terms of the transparency, and I applaud them for that. I think that's very important, and Albertans are demanding that at this point.

The carbon tax, that the NDP never campaigned on, is a good example of the very need for this type of transparency, that needs to be resolved. The Auditor General insinuated that there's a lack of accountability and oversight when it comes to the carbon tax. In the February 2018 report it states that "it does not clearly state the expected and actual cost of the overall CLP, and it does not state for each program the expected cost needed to achieve those reductions." This is unacceptable, and there needs to be more transparency and accountability for taxpayer dollars.

5:30

If the government wants to collect their levy, as they call it, then these taxes should be benefiting the programs directly. The money taken from these programs in the form of the carbon tax is really money that has been redirected to the programs that has been taken from the taxpayers in some form. The government then takes taxpayers' money from these programs and calls it a carbon levy and then plans to deposit it back into the general revenue. A good accounting trick, but let's be honest here. Albertans are not being tricked at all.

In a CBC article from January of this year entitled *Carbon Taxes Might Not Change Consumer Behaviour, But They Sure Will Feed Government Coffers* it talks of how "the governments requiring [Albertans'] money won't call it a tax." I understand the problems with them calling it a tax, but it is. A tax is a tax. Whether the

government wants to call it a tax or call it a levy, this needs to be resolved here and now with this motion. I believe that the government should put their money where their mouth is and show Albertans today that they want to appear open and accountable to Albertans. This motion is a great first step, but we would like to see the government go one step further and provide Albertans with fuller disclosure of the taxes that they are charged.

I've talked with constituents and stakeholders for the past three years, and I have heard that they are tired of the ever-increasing taxes, specifically the taxes on businesses and the carbon tax, that have hit everyone hard and have hurt families in every wrong way. Albertans understand that there is a need to support the programs and services they rely on, but what they are not in agreement with is a double-taxing situation that the programs and services are facing and the lack of accountability and transparency. Albertans deserve to know exactly where their money is going, and we believe that governments need to be held accountable to the taxpayer. Albertans not only deserve to know but have repeatedly questioned the government on this matter, to no resolve, I might add. I believe that this motion is the beginning of a promise to restore confidence in how programs and services are run in the province and to give hope for a brighter future.

Even in the federal Taxpayer Bill of Rights it says that it is every person's "right to complete, accurate, clear, and timely information." Madam Speaker, Albertans have a right to complete, accurate, clear, and timely information regarding where their tax dollars are being spent. Not only that, but in that same document it says that it is every person's "right to expect [the government] to warn [the people] about questionable tax schemes in a timely manner."

Madam Speaker, even though this motion could possibly increase red tape and regulation, it seems to me that this would be a sure step in the right direction. Now, as you know, I presented a private member's bill, that was defeated, to reduce red tape. Once again, though, the concept here is: what is reasonable for Albertans? I believe what is reasonable for Albertans is to have that transparency. I believe that if they knew where each of those tax dollars are being spent, there would be a lot more hue and cry from Albertans.

Alberta has a number of taxes, levies, fees, and fines that are all collected for a specific purpose. Without passage of this motion, there is nothing in legislation that would require the NDP government to actually direct the revenue from these taxes, levies, fees, and fines back to the programs and services that Albertans have spent their hard-earned dollars on. As a matter of fact, to direct them back into general revenue is a government who is trying to play catch-up by essentially double-billing Albertans. Taxpayers need these programs and services and do not want the government using these funds just to catch up on the debt that they have incurred while they have been in office. This is a reckless use of taxpayers' money.

It is my wish that all members of this Assembly would support this common-sense motion and get the ball rolling by redirecting the taxpayers' monies to the programs and services they are in need of rather than catering to an ideological position and creative accounting practices.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the motion?

Seeing none, I'll invite the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster to close debate.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to thank everyone who spoke in the debate today for their comments. You know, I do want to say that the intent of the motion today was to

open up a discussion. I appreciate the comments from the Minister of Finance. Actually, I have to say that I'm not surprised by those comments because they very much mirror the comments that were made by his predecessors, that were part of our government, who defended the current practice, based to a certain extent on advice from the folks in Treasury Board and Finance, as he said, and also defended it based on what's done in other provinces.

You know, I understand that. Life is easier when you can basically just take all the forms of revenue, put it into one pool, and then divvy it out accordingly. I get that, and I appreciate that that's a practice that he would defend. But the people that don't defend that practice are Albertans. The people that don't defend that practice or at least like the idea of some of what is being called for in this motion are the Albertans I talked to. Albertans would like to see some degree of logical linkage between what they pay to the government – and in some cases, that payment is very begrudging; in other cases, it's more willing – and what they receive back from the government.

I think it's fair to say that most of us don't particularly enjoy paying taxes. The day that our property tax bill arrives on our home we don't say: "Fantastic. My taxes arrived." Most people don't, but most people do appreciate that taxes are necessary in a civilized society to provide the services that we call government to provide for us. Now, there's obviously a debate as to what level of services should be provided. Some people feel there should be more. Others feel there should be fewer.

My argument is that as long as we're going to have these services, they should be delivered in such a way that they provide value to those who are paying for them and they should also provide quality to those who are receiving them. I think one of the things that's important – and I provided services to people in my business for close to 30 years. One of the things that I was always prepared to do was to justify the cost of the service and explain why there was value.

My concern and the reason for bringing forward this motion – and I'm not saying that every last service that government provides or every last fee the government charges has to immediately be linked to a specific service. I am saying: let's look for opportunities where we could do that to demonstrate and to help better inform the taxpaying public about the linkage between what it costs to provide a service and the payment that is being asked for, whether it's in the form of a personal or a corporate income tax or a fee or a charge on things.

I mean, there are many examples, sadly, Madam Speaker, where the fees we're charging are woefully inadequate. I'll give you one. You know, this is my bad. I was the minister of parks for a while. What we charge to camp in our provincial campgrounds is scandalously low. It's scandalously low. It's much lower than what is being charged generally in similarly equipped private campgrounds. Because it's been so low, we haven't been able to reinvest funds into the upkeep and modernization of those campgrounds.

You know, that's just one very small example, but for the quality that we're providing people in those campgrounds, for the quality of the site – we have absolutely gorgeous campgrounds in our provincial parks – sadly, some of the services that we are providing in those campgrounds have fallen behind simply because we have not reinvested. Part of the reason is that our provincial campgrounds, our provincial campsites have about a 33 per cent cost recovery. Other provinces recover fully 100 per cent of the cost of operating their campgrounds, and I think, actually, contrary to what the Minister of Finance said, the services they provide in fact are very high quality, higher quality in some cases than what we can provide.

Madam Speaker, my intent in this debate was not to have some partisan discussion about what taxes are good or what taxes aren't good. My intent in this was to encourage members to look at the possibility or the feasibility of providing a closer connection, for the benefit of taxpayers, between the services that they receive and the taxes they pay. Simply that. I will tell you that most Albertans that I talk to also agree that that would be a good idea, and I would encourage members to support this motion.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Starke
Anderson, W.	Gill	Stier
Barnes	Hunter	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Ceci	Horne	Phillips

Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstein	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sigurdson
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Goehring	McKittrick	Turner
Gray	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Nielsen	Woollard
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 36

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With a view to the hour and the wonderful success that we've had this afternoon, we'd like to call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 1 . . .

Some Hon. Members: Until 7:30.

Mr. Mason: Oh, yeah. We're coming back tonight. Okay. The fun never quits, Madam Speaker. So until 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]

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