



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 9, 2018

Day 27

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
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),
Government Whip
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),
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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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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
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Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, 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.

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today students from Viking school from the community of Viking. I had an opportunity to meet with them and their teachers, Mr. Brick and Mrs. Josephson. Amongst them I am sure that we have a future Don Mazankowski, Glen Sather, or one of the skating Sutters, because they all came from Viking. They, of course, are here to observe us in action, and they're particularly interested, as the students from Viking always are, in what happens over in this corner, the Valhalla section. I'd ask my colleagues in the House to join in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-South West 53 students from Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour school. They're accompanied by Ms Karen Mosewich and Mrs. Markiana Dhadli and their chaperone, Mr. Joffe Hotz. I'd ask them to rise now and please accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any additional school groups?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two amazing constituents of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Valerie Hawrelak and Eva Shwetz. Valerie and Eva have a keen interest in politics and governance and are eager today to watch the House proceedings and especially question period. I thank them for their continued support and for their interest. I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Tara Martin. Tara is a former work colleague of mine and an Edmonton entrepreneur who is doing some pretty remarkable work with gig work and the new workplace and really is somebody who is not only responding to but helping to shape the next economy in our province. It looks like Tara is standing there. I ask that you all give her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. The first is to rise in recognition of National Nursing Week. Alberta's nursing professionals bring compassion and expertise to the roles that are continuously evolving and changing over more than a hundred years here in Alberta. Our guests today are licensed practical nurses and members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. I'm grateful for their tireless work to care for Albertans when they need it most, and when we chatted outside, I realized that some of these staff actually cared for my own grandmother just down the street at the Edmonton General. I ask that those present, including Mary, Dolly, Remy, Teresita, Derrek, Bree-Ann, Sharon, and Edward, please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: The second introduction I have, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm privileged to introduce members of the Alberta and Northwest Territories division of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who are seated in the members' gallery. They work to improve the quality of life for those living with multiple sclerosis through education, support, research, and public awareness. I commend this society for bringing together researchers, health professionals, and the MS community to find better ways to care for Albertans. I invite Dr. Garry Wheeler, Dr. Penny Smyth, Dr. Pamela Valentine, Patrycia Rzechowka, Candice Laws, and Julie Kelndorfer to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have two introductions. It is my privilege to rise today to recognize National Nursing Week. Nurses are a critical part of our health care system, and we value the work that they do to provide the right care in the right place at the right time. I am so grateful for the work of the more than 40,000 registered nurses from across this province, who provide compassion and care to Albertans when they need it most. I am so glad that members were able to join us on Wear White Wednesday. I would now ask that Meagan LaRiviere from the College and Association of Registered Nurses and Jane Sustrik and Karen Craik from the United Nurses of Alberta please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Payne: I'm also honoured to introduce to you and through you guests from the Canadian Mental Health Association housing program, who are joining us today during Mental Health Week. The goal of the program is to provide quality, secure, and affordable housing for people with mental illnesses and/or low income. The CMHA is committed to building healthy, resilient communities by providing mental health services, educational resources, and crisis intervention. I thank them so very much for their partnership in making life better for Albertans. I ask Gail Haynes, Averie McNary, Richard Boulet, and Cheryl Williams to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to join in the recognition of National Nursing Week. I rise today to introduce to

you and through you Dr. Harrison Applin, dean of health, Northern Lakes College, indigenous scholar, leadership studies, and Shelly Gladue, senior adviser, north zone, indigenous health program. Dr. Applin is a board member of the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association. And representing Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, Health Director Sandra Lamouche, and Treaty 8 protocol office and Bigstone Cree Nation members Margo Auger and Cheryl Moberly. The CINA works with communities, health professionals, and government institutions on aboriginal health nursing issues and practices within the Canadian health system that address particular interest and concern in aboriginal communities. CINA's work benefits aboriginal peoples of Canada by improving their health and well-being physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. I'd please ask all of my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Opposition

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest study from the Fraser Institute indicates that a lack of pipeline capacity in Canada will cost our energy sector as much as \$15.8 billion this year. That's .7 per cent of national GDP. Think about it for a minute. If our country had effective national and provincial leadership steering pipeline projects into reality, our national GDP would increase by almost a full percentage point without any government incentives or spending. In fact, invoking constitutional jurisdiction might just be enough to get hostile provincial governments out of the way.

Mr. Speaker, who are the people blocking this pipeline? Our government's fellow-travellers, their B.C. NDP colleagues, who I imagine would vigorously defend the pensions of B.C. government employees. But even the B.C. Investment Management Corporation, which manages pension funds for their public-sector workers, sees the importance of our energy industry and invests in companies like Enbridge, Pembina corporation, and, lo and behold, Kinder Morgan.

Not only is Horgan putting the livelihoods of Alberta and B.C. oil and gas workers at risk; Mr. Speaker, he is risking the financial futures of his own employees and an untold number of other public-sector employees across Canada, whose pension funds are invested in our humble energy industry, protecting the public sector with yet another dose of hypocrisy, indeed.

Finally, who is actually on the front lines protesting this pipeline? Free speech gives individuals the right and the ability to voice their opinion for or against Kinder Morgan within the confines of the law. However, just this week when Global B.C. tried to film the protest camp and the structure that is being built there as these individuals settle in for the long haul, the journalists and the crew were threatened with violence by the protestors and were told they could not film even though it was on public property.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that one day we will have a federal government with the courage to step in and press our vital energy interests as a national priority instead of sitting idly by and letting the hypocrites and violent foreign-funded protesters rule the day.

Thank you.

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

1:40

Progressivism and Conservatism

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As an MLA I get to hear a lot of debate with many terms in this House. Two of the most relevant are the terms "progressive" and "conservative." The definition of the word "progressive" includes the concept that the human condition as a whole can be improved, that progress, improvement, and social justice are possible for everyone. Our government talks about everyday Albertans and the need to focus on a bright future for everyone. It is the NDP government that is investing in health care, education, seniors' services, youth, children, families, socioeconomic growth, and environment. All in all the concept is that the next recovery is for everyone in every area of life.

The definition of the word "conservative" includes the concept that tradition and existing social and political hierarchies must be maintained, that social stability and continuity are critical. In more extreme, reactionary cases conservatives seek a return to the way things were. That's what the UCP wants, to return to the past, a society built on traditional power structures. Their inherent inequity is part of their platform.

Mr. Speaker, as we grow older, our needs change. The needs of each generation change due to continuous advancements in population and technology. The needs of each generation and life in each century are different. If we do not accept this reality, then we are doing injustice to Albertans by imposing traditional ways upon them that no longer serve them. Conservatives' refusal to support our government's policies to increase rights for the LGBTQ-plus community, provide equity for women in the workplace and the economy, and enhance the fairness of elections is nothing but injustice to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, our province demands a progressive government that is striving to build a future for Albertans instead of turning back the clock, like the Conservatives want, to a time that no longer exists.

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

Carbon Levy

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the Leader of the Opposition was in Ottawa standing up for Alberta's economy and against the carbon tax, a tax the NDP failed to mention in the election but imposed anyway, the largest tax increase in our province's history. On January 1 the NDP raised the carbon tax 50 per cent and have committed to raising it again a further 67 per cent. This is the frog in the pot, bit-by-bit increases to get Albertans used to paying more for everyday essentials.

The NDP will continue to raise this tax. Experts say that in order to reach Paris targets, the tax has to go up to \$300 a tonne. Advocates of the carbon tax would rather see it increase than look for sensible, positive adaptations and changes to anthropogenic global warming and that would actually reduce greenhouse gases, not burden Alberta families. Instead, they will continue to increase the carbon tax, forcing Albertans to pay more to heat their homes in winter and drive to work.

The NDP sold the carbon tax as a social licence. They told Albertans that if they paid more for just about everything, we'd get pipelines built. How's that working out? Well, as we see in the news today, we're approaching Kinder Morgan's May 31 deadline and are nowhere near to getting Alberta resources to tidewater. The NDP's friends in British Columbia continue to firmly oppose any pipeline and will stop at nothing to get the Trans Mountain pipeline cancelled with their death-by-delay methods.

B.C. had the first carbon tax. Instead of causing people to alter their consumption behaviour and use less gasoline, sales have skyrocketed over 23 per cent, over a billion litres increase in demand from 2012 to 2016. No change of behaviour there, and no social licence. Not one activist or the Prime Minister has gone from no to yes on pipelines. And greenhouse gases? Hmm. No statistically measurable change except up with a hope of going down while protestors keep using hydrocarbon fuel to power their lives along with the rest of the world.

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

Multiple Sclerosis

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, a campaign to raise awareness as Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world; 1 in 340 Canadians are living with this disease. However, Canada has the best MS researchers in the world. MS is an autoimmune disease, which means the immune system, designed to protect against intruders such as viruses and bacteria, attacks tissues in the body. In the case of MS the tissue that is targeted is myelin. Without myelin the communication between nerve cells is disrupted, and the body does not receive the instructions necessary to perform basic functions like speaking, seeing, walking, and learning.

MS is the most common neurological disease affecting young adults in Canada. While it is the most diagnosed in young adults ages 15 to 40, we know that it also affects younger children and older adults. Women are three times more likely to be susceptible to MS.

Symptoms of MS depend on what part or parts of the central nervous system are affected. This can include the brain, spinal cord, or optic nerve. For this reason, symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary greatly from person to person and can fluctuate within the same person from one time to the next. This can lead to impairments of vision, memory, balance, and mobility.

The cause of MS is still a mystery. However, thanks to the continued research by groups such as the MS Society of Canada, Alberta, and the MS Scientific Research Foundation, we are getting closer to exploring ways to repair the damage it causes and getting even closer to preventing MS from occurring.

The MS Society asks that we as Members of the Legislative Assembly work with them to both improve the lives of Albertans living with MS and raise awareness not only during the month of May but year-round.

Thank you.

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

Carbon Levy and Vulnerable Albertans

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The law of unintended consequences is a rule articulated by reputed economists, who point out that the actions of people and, especially, of government will often have effects that are unanticipated or unintended. It seems that this government simply does not consider this concept of unintended consequences.

The cost of energy is a shining example of how what was perceived to be in the public interest can go horribly wrong. Recently my constituency offices in Drumheller-Stettler have received several calls concerning the consequence of this government's energy policy, proving that, typically and unfortunately, unintended consequences often land at the feet of our most vulnerable and those least equipped to handle it. I'm getting calls from single mothers, the disabled, and seniors who are indicating that Alberta's legislators have failed when it comes to securing energy. It's disheartening, Mr. Speaker,

to hear people on the phone saying that they have to decide: do I eat, or do I have electricity? Up till now this government has generally resorted to blaming the previous government or another level of government for problems. But doing such a thing will not keep anyone's lights on, heat a home, and it definitely will not feed anybody.

What would help these struggling Albertans is if this government cancelled its crippling carbon tax. That would keep hard-earned money in people's pockets and lessen the burden when it comes to utility costs. It is imperative that we all remember that real people suffer real consequences that affect their lives and their families, Mr. Speaker, regardless of whether the consequences were intended or otherwise. It matters very little to the senior sitting in the dark or a single mother wondering how she can possibly keep lights on and feed her children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Provincial Election Third Anniversary

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago our government came into power, and I'd like to mark that anniversary by looking at some of our achievements.

We banned corporate and union donations to keep big money out of politics.

We enhanced farm safety, protection, and compensation for farm workers. We did this while the opposition yelled and screamed that we were killing the family farm. The opposition was obviously wrong, and it's clear that they would have left paid workers vulnerable and unprotected. Zero farms have been killed in my constituency. In fact, profitability has gone up, and land values have increased.

We know that human-influenced climate change is real and instituted a carbon levy to help support environmental change, foster clean energy jobs, and create a made-in-Alberta solution. In my constituency alone three solar companies have hired 20-plus employees.

We took the advice of financial experts and invested in infrastructure projects while the economy was down. We've kept Albertans working and tackled the crumbling infrastructure that Conservatives left behind. We're building a hospital in Calgary, while the Conservatives blew one up. We will build 200 schools. While the Conservatives promised 400, they built two.

We are raising minimum wage to give the lowest paid people in Alberta a chance at dignity. This while the opposition incorrectly screams that it is killing the Alberta economy. It's obvious they would have kept Alberta's working poor even poorer.

We've created over 90,000 new jobs in the past year, most of them in the private sector.

We've expanded the sunshine list for public servants earning more than \$125,000, and we're getting rid of the outrageous salaries and perks that ABC appointees enjoyed under the Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, we've made progress on so many things that it would take three more years just to talk about it. Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Bill 12 and Federal Tanker Ban Legislation

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is only 22 days until the deadline for Kinder Morgan's decision on possible cancellation of

the Trans Mountain pipeline, that they have cancelled. This government brought forward Bill 12, the turn-off-the-taps legislation, at our suggestion, supposedly to give us leverage in opposing British Columbia's stalling tactics. However, that bill is not moving forward. Given that there are only 22 days left, what is the government waiting for? Why aren't they expeditiously moving through this place their supposed keynote legislation to turn off the taps?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly are keen to move a number of bills forward in this House, and we certainly welcome every member of this Legislature to debate all of those bills and support us in that. For example, when it comes to doing your job, we look forward this afternoon to debating, in Committee of the Whole, Bill 9. We certainly look forward to being able to do that. We welcome all members to participate in that, and we also welcome all members to participate in every piece of legislation. We have a number of bills that are important to the people of Alberta, including Bill 12, and we're proud to be able to move that forward soon.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, Bill 9 is something they didn't even think was important enough to mention in their throne speech, let alone their platform, but Bill 12 was billed as the keynote legislation of this session to turn off the taps, to get tough with the New Democrats in British Columbia for blocking our resources and attacking our vital economic interests. But now, nothing. In fact, they voted to adjourn debate on that critical, urgent legislation. Why? Why are they surrendering? Isn't this just a pattern? They surrendered to Trudeau's cancellation of Northern Gateway, his killing of Energy East. Aren't they now surrendering to the B.C. New Democrats on Trans Mountain?

Ms Hoffman: No, Mr. Speaker. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. If we want to talk about surrendering to failure, I think the member opposite could look at his track record in Ottawa, with nearly a decade in cabinet and not getting a pipeline to tidewater. This side of the House has been working diligently. We got our approvals, we're making progress every day, and we won't back down until that pipeline is built. We're also going to deal with other important matters like women accessing abortion services or youth being protected from being outed. We're proud to protect people in this province and to get a pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, last night the House of Commons passed Bill C-48 to impose a ban on tankers exporting Canadian oil from our northwest coast. That is now going to the Senate of Canada. Does the Alberta NDP government support or oppose Bill C-48, the Trudeau ban on the export of our oil from the northwest coast?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're working diligently, day in and day out, to get our products to tidewater. Of course, getting our products there is part of the challenge. Of course, the other piece is making sure that we can get them to a world that is thirsty for Canadian energy products, Alberta energy products. We certainly are working to make sure that we get our product there and we get our product across those oceans to the other markets. I have to say that we won't take advice on how to get this pipeline built from the member opposite since he didn't actually manage to do it when he had a Conservative government here, he was in a Conservative government in Ottawa, and we didn't get it done. But you know what? This government is up to the task, and we will get the job done.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Federal Policies on Oil and Gas Transportation

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it was not advice, nor was it an invitation for clichéd government talking points. It was a very simple question, which was not answered, so I will repeat it. Does this government support or oppose the federal Bill C-48 to impose a tanker ban on the export of Canadian oil? I will repeat: does this government support or oppose the federal Bill C-48 to ban Canadian oil tanker exports from the northwest coast?

Ms Hoffman: It's really sweet of the member opposite to ask the question slower the second time. Thanks for that. I really appreciate that tone that you're setting in this House.

We've been clear with Ottawa that our energy and environmental sectors can work together to promote economic development and don't need to sacrifice one to have the other. In fact, late last year Minister Garneau, at a press conference, referred to the concerns that we had with the federal tanker ban bill. Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear about our record on this issue and on all issues that are before this House. In this House we also debate bills that matter to women who are accessing health care services. We wish that the Official Opposition would do their job.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I think the minister said something about concern. Is that opposition or support for the bill, Mr. Speaker? Will the government join with the Official Opposition in calling on their federal Liberal allies to drop Bill C-48, the ban on the export of Canadian oil from our northwest coast? I repeat: will they join with us in calling on the federal government to stop the C-48 attack on our energy industry?

Ms Hoffman: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we're happy to make our position triply, quadruply clear. We've told the federal government that there are better ways to protect the west coast, which has had tankers moving safely along it since the 1930s. We are fighting for this pipeline to tidewater. We're fighting for tankers.

It's nice that you want to debate federal legislation, but you're sitting in a provincial Legislature. There's a bill before this House that can stand up for women. You have an opportunity to tell us whether or not you're going to stand with women or hide in the bathroom with your colleagues. We'll see what happens in about an hour. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Kenney: I can only infer that this government doesn't really care about the imposition of this tanker traffic ban by their federal Liberal allies, yet another example of their total failure to stand up for Alberta's interests.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the federal government also said that they were going to bring forward legislation to clarify federal jurisdiction over the Trans Mountain pipeline. That was supposedly part of the co-ordinated strategy between our Premier and Prime Minister to ensure the construction of Trans Mountain. That bill hasn't come forward. Is there now a co-ordinated strategy to down tools and surrender to John Horgan on Trans Mountain?

Ms Hoffman: Of course not, Mr. Speaker.

If you want to talk about co-ordinated strategy, let's talk about the UCP's fiscal plan, that only benefits the incredibly wealthy.

You might think that's me talking. It's not, actually. It's a quote from U of C economist Lindsay Tedds, who said that it is very clear that everyday Albertans will get nothing from the economic policies that are being proposed by the members opposite, only \$700 million in tax giveaways to the richest of Albertans. What would be the cost? Schools, hospitals, the economy, that we've worked so hard to diversify. You know what? Let's talk about the issues that matter to regular Albertans because this is one of them.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Proposal

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what concerns us about the government's failure to move forward with their turn-off-the-taps legislation, their surrender to the federal Liberal shutdown of the northern coast, the Trudeau government deciding not to proceed with its pipeline legislation is that instead we're hearing a lot of talk about backroom deals to have taxpayers essentially buy the pipeline. Does the government not understand that any public financial participation in the pipeline should be a last resort and not a first resort and that we should first fight for the rule of law and the construction of that pipeline?

The Speaker: Hon. member, it was your third main. I apologize. I thought it was the second supplemental.

The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like the member is backtracking on the position he took very clearly about a month ago, when he said that he stood with this government to make sure that we would get our product to tidewater, even if that meant buying the pipeline. It sounds like he's backing down. Maybe it's because some of the folks he's friends with in Ottawa, where he likes to spend a lot of time, are telling him that that's problematic for their position. I guess we'll only find out one way. But you know what? The truth is that on this side of the House we will let nothing get in our way on pipeline access to the west coast. That's why we are moving on three fronts: the courts; public investment, if it comes to that; and, of course, making sure that we are moving forward with our legislation, Bill 12. We're very proud of that.

Mr. Kenney: They're not moving forward with the bill that they just adjourned.

Mr. Speaker, I said that we would be willing in principle to see financial participation as a last resort. As a last resort. The first resort was to fight back. The first resort was to ensure that the British Columbia government understands that there will be consequences. It appears that what we've got are backroom deals being made to force taxpayers to clean up the mess created by this provincial government and their close ally Justin Trudeau. How many billions of tax dollars are they prepared to risk in order to clean up their political mess?

Ms Hoffman: Well, here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. We hear a lot of stuff in this House that doesn't exactly ring of the truth. Here's one. This afternoon we will be debating Bill 12. It's in Committee of the Whole. We welcome the members opposite to help us get it moving forward in a very timely manner because this is a tool that it's important that Albertans have at their disposal. The Minister of Energy has made it very clear that nothing will stand in our way on getting this pipeline. We've been having meetings with folks from across this country and building national support around this national pipeline, that's in the national interest, and we look

forward to seeing you move this forward with us in an expeditious fashion.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is becoming slightly comical. The Official Opposition voted to continue debating Bill 12 to get it done. It was the NDP that voted to adjourn debate on their own bill because they wanted to delay it. The question is: why? What are they cooking up behind closed doors in terms of risking tax dollars with their close ally Justin Trudeau? Why won't they stand up for Albertans against Justin Trudeau? Why won't they stand up against his tanker ban? Why won't they stand up against his failure to bring forward federal pipeline legislation? Why, instead, are they prepared to risk billions of dollars of taxpayers to bail them out of this political problem?

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: We'll be debating that exact bill this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

If you want to talk about why, why is it that the member opposite is committing to having a \$700 million tax break for the richest 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, with those cuts, of course, inevitably happening to schools and hospitals, to the health care providers that we count on to make sure that we have a healthier society tomorrow than the one we inherited yesterday? Our students and loved ones will suffer if that \$700 million cut goes forward, as the Official Opposition is proposing. We saw it under 44 years of Tory rule. We actually stand up for Albertans on this side, and they only stand up for their rich friends and insiders.

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

Antiracism Strategy Development

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, the vast majority of Albertans are open and welcoming, but sadly our province is not immune from racism. Today we learned about a disturbing incident caught on video. This government says that they want to tackle racism, but their words are not backed up by action. Community grants under the human rights, education, and multiculturalism fund have been cut by the NDP to levels lower than 2013, and at the same time the Alberta Human Rights Commission reports that complaints are the highest they have seen in 15 years. To the Premier. Words are meaningless without action. Why have you cut the very programs intended to target racism?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Racist and bigoted comments have no place here. We know that Alberta is a positive and welcoming place, and so is the city of Lethbridge. I think any of us who saw the video today are absolutely shocked by what we saw displayed there. That's why we're not only working with the items that the member has referred to, but also we have a minister dedicated to ensuring that the work around antiracism moves forward in this province because we absolutely are better when we are loving and accepting of one another.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the minister mentioned the work that the Minister of Education was tasked with nearly a year and a half ago. At the time, you got some good headlines, but since then we've heard absolutely nothing. Hundreds

of Albertans participated in consultations in good faith in hopes that your government would take real action to address their concerns about increasing racism. The mandate letter to the minister says that his work was to be completed by last fall. Now, it's funny how priorities change when the story slips out of the headlines. Again to the Premier: will we see the report soon? Have you given up on it, or do you have the report and you've simply decided not to release it?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for that important question. Certainly, yes, we have been working on a paper and a strategy to fight racism, to foster inclusion, and promote acceptance in the province of Alberta, and we have been working hard on this issue for the last number of months. We will have a paper and the results of this very, very soon. In the meantime we've been working in Education to further this since the best way to fight ignorance is through education.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans from diverse backgrounds face racism far too often. The incident we're learning about today is a particularly graphic example, but it is far from the only one. In April this year there was an anti-Muslim rally held in Calgary. This weekend we saw disturbing anti-indigenous sentiments loudly voiced at a political convention. People of colour face subtle and overt racism in their everyday lives. Premier, addressing racism in our society absolutely must be a priority. It's easier to write a letter to a minister, but it's much more difficult to take real action. I want to know exactly what this government plans to do to address racism and when we will see concrete results.

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member again for the question. We are in the final stages of consultation on the report that we promised, and we are working with the community. It's proving to be very complex work. When we intervene to stop racism, it is at any opportunity we have the chance. I'm very proud of the fact that Alberta Health Services worked very quickly around disciplinary measures when health care workers last year used racist terms. They fired those workers. We know that there are hundreds of Albertans that are working alongside to make sure that we get this right. We want to honour their report. It will be released very soon, but we want to make sure that we get it right.

Thank you.

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

School Nutrition Programs

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too many children go to school with empty stomachs, and we know that they cannot learn properly if they are hungry. That is why we introduced the important pilot school nutrition program in 2016. To the Minister of Education: are we looking to further expand this program through Budget 2018?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to say that, yes, in fact, we are intending to expand this program. We are now feeding more than 30,000 kids a day a daily nutritious

snack or meal through Budget 2018, and we have been expanding it exponentially every step of the way. We know that it causes positive effects in regard to education and learning, and it also fosters a positive relationship between the school and the parents and the children. It's in all ways a very, very successful initiative.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: this program does not extend to all schools across the province, so how do you decide which schools will benefit from this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We've been working so that all school boards have access to this program, and they are making the choices based on socioeconomic factors and so forth to see where their areas of greatest need are. I was just amazed how school boards have taken to this and have expanded the program, have combined with charities and existing food programs to do truly, truly a wonderful job. This program is dependent on the budget that I brought forward, and I was really, really disappointed to see that the members of the opposite side refused to vote for this.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what kind of improved learning outcomes have we seen for these children?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly, when kids are well fed, they are more confident as well. They're able to concentrate on their studies and learn about food as well, quite frankly. There's a component of curriculum built into the nutrition program so that they can set up a lifetime of good habits and positive returns. You know, it costs money to run this program, and I'd rather put that money into the nutrition program than into the pockets of the richest 1 per cent in our province.

Long-term and Continuing Care Beds

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, in the last election the NDP promised to create 2,000 public long-term care beds. Now, depending on the day, the Health minister says either that it's already been done or that they're well on their way. Now, most of the beds that have been created came about as a result of the 2014-15 ASLI program, that this minister first delayed and then proceeded with. To the minister: as I asked in estimates and have not yet received a response, what is the number of public long-term care beds that have been created since you took office, and where are they located?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I recall the day where the member is referring to me potentially misspeaking, but I want to assure all Albertans that our commitment to build 2,000 long-term care and dementia spaces by 2019 is well under way and that we're on track to achieving that. In fact, since coming into government, we've approved approximately 3,002 – I guess that's not approximately if it's 3,002 – new long-term care and dementia spaces. That includes beds which will be completed beyond 2019. The three public builds are Calgary, the complex care there at Bridgeland; Norwood here in Edmonton; and Willow Square, of course, in Fort McMurray. Those will be completed after 2019, but they are well under way.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at those. Given that the vast majority of long-term care beds are a result of the government simply completing ASLI projects that were already planned or under way under the previous government and given that those beds were built at an average cost to the taxpayer of \$65,000 per bed and that this government's three projects, that the Health minister just mentioned, will create 489 new beds at a projected cost of \$587 million, or \$1.2 million each, to the minister: why are the long-term care beds created by your government 18 times more expensive?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks. I believe I also committed to tabling the math because I think there's some creativity happening by members who keep asserting those numbers, so we are working to ensure that we do that. The former Conservative government made a lot of promises without actually budgeting or signing any contracts. When we came in as a government, we made sure that their empty promises became actual projects. We moved many of those beds up from being lower levels of care to being long-term care or dementia care beds, and many of them are open. For a fact, I toured St. Theresa – I always want to say Mother Teresa – in Calgary just on Friday, and the staff and the residents who are there are in very good hands, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:10

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that in this time of fiscal restraint strategic partnerships with nonprofit, faith-based, and private continuing care providers would maximize every taxpayer dollar and given that many Alberta communities are desperate for additional continuing care spaces but the government's current building projects have resulted in skyrocketing costs, to the Minister of Health: will the minister inform Albertans whether future projects will be built using a cost-effective partnership program like ASLI, or will she continue with the government-only projects, that are astronomically more expensive and provide a tiny fraction of the number of beds?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the fact that we're building almost 200 net new beds in Calgary for complex patients, who are some of the most challenging to care for. We're also building 350 at Norwood, which I think is important, 145 net new for, again, patients who are some of the most hard to care for and who regularly find that they aren't welcome in other facilities. It's important for us to build a variety of types of options for the people of this province because nobody should be living in a hospital bed or receiving care that is inappropriate. For folks who are receiving the most complex care, we need to make sure that they have those options as well. So I'm not going to apologize for building . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Calgary-West.

Drug Use and Treatment in Correctional Facilities

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Four people in custody died of suspected opioid overdoses in Alberta's correctional centres in the last few weeks. One of the young men had told a family member that he was staying clean by choice because he had access to a whole market of drugs in the Lethbridge Correctional Centre. Minister, what are you doing about this crisis? I'm asking

specifically about the systemic problem of drugs in the correctional facilities.

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. We know that drugs have been getting into corrections facilities since corrections facilities have existed. As a result of the new designer drugs coming onto the market and the new opioids coming onto the market, those have become much more dangerous not only for individuals in the facilities but for our staff working inside those facilities. We continue to implement a number of methods that I'm sure I'll get to talk about in subsequent answers, but one of our brand new initiatives is that body scanner that we implemented at the Edmonton Remand Centre. That is having some great results, and we're hoping to be able to expand that pilot project.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that drugs fuel crime and that rural Alberta is dealing with a crisis that is seeing repeat offenders prey upon those citizens and given that addictions counselling is critical to helping people become law-abiding members of our society, which in turn helps reduce crime, Minister, why does it appear not to be a priority of your government to ensure that people in custody receive addictions counselling in our correctional centres?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely a priority of our government to ensure that people throughout the province, whether they're in custody or out of custody, have access to those services. What that requires is that we fund the staff to assist with that, that we fund the medication to assist with that. That's why we're continuing to invest. We're continuing to invest not only in my department but in the Health department and throughout the province. It is absolutely critical that we invest in those things. It's critical that we target these long-term offenders and ensure that we are dealing with the issues that are causing them to offend, and that's exactly what this government is doing.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. As the minister previously mentioned, given that the ministry invested in body scanners last year to stem the flow of concealed drugs into the Edmonton Remand Centre and given that the minister said that her department would assess the scanner's effectiveness over the course of the year, which we all, of course, look forward to, Minister, what were the results of that study, and are you planning to expand the scanner program based upon them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we're still evaluating the information on that, but I would have to say that I don't want to speak too soon, but initial signs look incredibly positive. That scanner has been having some fantastic results. We're incredibly glad that we had the opportunity to partner with our staff to invest in that piece of equipment. We intend to hopefully move that forward very quickly. Of course, that requires that we fund those

projects, and I hope that the opposition is interested in actually voting for funding those projects in the future.

Oil Sands Investments Provincial Debt

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, yet another job provider, Royal Dutch Shell, is divesting from Alberta oil sands. To the Premier. You promised that in exchange for your job-killing carbon tax, Alberta would receive social licence to build pipelines and attract investment. Shell leaving is yet another example of how your plan has failed. When will you scrap the carbon tax, reduce regulatory burden, and admit your alliance with Justin Trudeau is not in Alberta's best interests?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we agree with the opposition that failure is not an option on the Trans Mountain expansion, and that's why we've taken the actions that we have. Where we don't agree is that apparently the members opposite don't believe that kids deserve to be safe in their schools. They don't agree that women have reproductive rights. They don't agree that we need to support public education and support teachers. Where we disagree is in the servicing of extremist special-interest groups. On this side of the House we have the backs of ordinary Albertans. On that side of the House they've been hijacked by extremist special interests.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I'm appalled that Alberta's youth unemployment rate is nearly 14 per cent, 30 per cent higher than in the rest of Canada. Given that Alberta youth are facing the additional burden of repaying this NDP interest on debt instead of saving for their own futures, to the minister: how do you expect Alberta's youth to repay your interest and your wild spending while your government policies are forcing companies like Shell, Statoil, and Marathon to flee the province, resulting in reduced opportunity for all Alberta youth?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Viking Air just announced 150 jobs in Calgary, with a chance of 900 more jobs in Calgary. Some of those youth will probably want to work in those areas, and they'll be hiring. Youth also have a chance at an education that's affordable in this province because of the work of this government. The youth in Alberta are also getting apprenticeships. STEP was restarted after that side cut it off. The summer temporary employment program is helping many youth get back into the workplace. Those are all great things we're doing on this side. That side doesn't really do any of that stuff.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that a recent U of C report indicates that young Albertans each face an additional tax of over \$40,000 – that's on top of all this NDP's other income taxes – to repay this Finance minister's big-spending ways and given that if this interest burden was instead invested in an RSP, a 16-year-old Albertan would accumulate over \$100,000 by retirement, to the minister: why do you and your NDP government insist on making young Albertans poorer?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know what happens when you pay attention to youth and you pay attention to

postsecondary? You get a lot of great results in the province. One of the things we're doing is paying attention to postsecondary institutions. We're making sure that they have the supports they need, and when we do that, we turn out great, educated young people. Instead of vilifying them, vilifying teachers, and vilifying the education industry, we pay attention to that. If you want more information on that, we'll be happy to give you information on what we're doing at postsecondary institutions and hope that you pay attention to the excellent work educators in this province are doing.

Mental Health Services for Children

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I raised in the House the issue of services for the mental health of Alberta's children and was only met with talking points from this government. Our children need and deserve so much better. Recently released data from the last year showed that the number of children offered mental health treatment within 30 days had fallen almost 10 per cent. Thirty days for families desperately waiting for help. To the minister: if it was your child in need of mental health supports, would you want to be part of the over one-quarter of Albertans that have to wait?

Ms Hoffman: Of course not, Mr. Speaker. There is no Alberta family who, when they have somebody they care about, wants to see them do without. They want to make sure that they get the care they need. That's why this government brought forward a budget that increased investment. Even though last year we increased investment, we know that demand went up even more than the increase. That's why we increased it again. That's why earlier this week I was at Jasper Place high school talking about the STAR program, something where we are adding to the grant that helped fund that, a 50 per cent increase in funding so that thousands of children across our province can have increased access to excellent mental health support in schools.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the government can claim all they want that they're addressing the issues, but the numbers don't lie. Given that in the past year the numbers of children actually receiving mental health treatment within 30 days have dropped from 73 per cent to 67 per cent and given that those are the facts, why is it that this government's investments in mental health are not being reflected in outcomes for vulnerable children, and when will they actually get control of these plunging statistics that have real-world impacts on Alberta's families?

2:20

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so happy to be able to talk about mental health during Mental Health Week. You know, it's hard to know where to start with this one, but I think an important piece is that what we're seeing is an increase in demand. Due to the work that our government and community health partners are doing to reduce stigma, to make it okay to talk about mental health and mental health challenges, we're seeing more and more Albertans coming forward. That's a good thing. People were struggling all along, and now they're reaching out and getting connected with the supports they need. In Edmonton alone we've increased the number of spots for youth and children accessing services . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, in Children's Services estimates my colleague discovered that two key strategies from last year's

business plan relating to children's mental health were not even transferred into this year's plan. Given that these issues were not addressed in the last year and given that the government still has not supported and implemented the recommendations from the mental health review and given that, when asked, the Children's Services minister claimed that this was Health's problem, when will the government step up, stop passing the buck, take some responsibility, and ensure that our children's mental health is a priority?

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, we have ensured that children's mental health is a priority. We did that by increasing investment year over year in the term of our government into mental health supports for Albertans across the province, from the northernmost tips to the southernmost tips. We are working with community partners, with community agencies. We are recruiting child psychiatrists across the province. There is a shortage in Canada, and to address that, we are also looking at how we can support families while they're waiting to access other supports. We're also doing work to build resilient communities. We know that mental health exists on a spectrum, and we have Albertans' backs. The members opposite should have voted in favour of the budget if they . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Drinking Water Quality in Indigenous Communities

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After years of setbacks and attempts to ignore the problem by the previous Conservative government, our NDP government has made significant strides in renewing the relationship between government and indigenous communities in Alberta. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what is the Alberta government doing to ensure that First Nations reserves have access to clean water?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of what our government has done to renew the relationship with indigenous people of this province, who were clearly long neglected under the previous government. We're working with First Nations, the federal government, municipal water commissions, and Alberta's Ministry of Transportation on the First Nations regional drinking water tie-in project, which will help determine how we can provide access to clean and safe drinking water on First Nations reserves. I'm proud to say that we are the first province in the country who has put our provincial money forward to do this.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Conditions on reserves have traditionally been the responsibility of the federal government. It has pained me over these years to know that our former Conservative government refused to act on this file. Why has Alberta's provincial government now finally chosen to act in this case in response to this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member mentioned, water on reserves is the federal government's responsibility. However, our government has chosen to support that responsibility by working with our partners to expand water infrastructure to the reserve boundaries – our investment in water to reserves, our leveraging federal dollars to ensure that First

Nations in Alberta have clean, reliable drinking water – and the side benefit is that many other communities near reserves are also getting connected, something, again, that was neglected by the previous government.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. This problem certainly is not going to be solved overnight. I'm just wondering if the minister could give us a progress report. What number of indigenous families have been served with clean drinking water as a result of your initiatives?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The First Nations regional tie-in project is currently considering about a dozen projects throughout the province. Our government is funding the construction up to the reserve boundaries of the Alexis Nakota Sioux, just west of the city of Edmonton, and the Paul band First Nation, again west of the city of Edmonton, both of which will be completed in this year. Two other projects are in the design phase, four are in the feasibility phase, and others are in the engagement phase. These are exciting projects. They have a high degree of support by the indigenous community. We have brought in the support of the federal government in a way that has never been done before, and we are doing something that should have been long done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Oil and Gas Rail Transportation

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Energy minister said that her new crude-by-rail working group is looking for solutions to address bottlenecks in the rail system. Her focus is on moving oil. Albertans are aware that we need more access to foreign markets, not just the heavily discounted U.S. market. To the Energy minister: we all want Trans Mountain to succeed, but has the minister given any consideration to expanding market access with a rail line from northern Alberta to Valdez, Alaska?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for that important question. You know, we're absolutely at a critical point not only in pipelines but in rail capacity, and that is exactly why we announced last week our crude-by-rail panel, who's going to meet with stakeholders to look at options. We do absolutely need market access, which is truck, rail, and pipelines to the Pacific coast to get our products to market. The company he mentioned, G7G, is one of them that we're talking to, who have an exciting project going north.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the proposed G7G rail line would have the flexibility to move bitumen, grain, forestry products, and many more commodities to ports that are significantly closer to China and given that the company does not need government funding – it is just looking for support – to the economic development minister: since meeting with G7G in February, what steps have you taken to support this project?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, one of the great things about our economic development minister is that no one works harder. He is constantly on a plane, having those conversations, travelling around, making sure that when we talk about innovation and we talk about diversifying our economy, we are walking that talk. I think that's really important. Certainly, when it comes to information like that, we're happy to get that over to your office. I know we have open lines of communication. We're happy to continue that.

Speaking of walking the talk, Mr. Speaker, certainly there's an opportunity for the opposition to do that as well. If they want to ask questions . . .

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the G7G railway is a green project because the locomotives would be electrically driven, with power produced by wind turbines, and given that our northern neighbours support this project because of the economic development potential it offers them as well as the indigenous partnerships involved, to the Energy minister: since rail lines seem to check off all your boxes, will you commit to invite G7G to your next working group meeting?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I can further comment for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. He and I have both met with the proponents, and he reports that he feels they're doing good work in demonstrating that they have the ability to raise the capital. Absolutely, I will contact the chair of that panel and make sure that they have the ability to meet with the chair and, hopefully, the whole panel, because that's an important part of our market access strategy.

Health Services Employees

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, I have previously asked the Health minister about the duplication of bureaucracy in Alberta Health Services and the Department of Health. The Auditor General pointed out that there's parallel management at the highest levels. Everything from mental health to continuing care to infection prevention have mirrored management structures within the Ministry of Health. Has this government done anything to evaluate and streamline these officials to increase efficiency for patients?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly do look for opportunities to protect the front lines and increase investment there at any opportunity. Of course, the responsible thing to do is to always look at whether there are efficiencies and opportunities for management or duplication of structures.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really proud of the fact that we've been able to hold our health spending increase to 3 per cent while increasing front-line services at a greater level than that. That's because we have a government that's working to invest and reduce any type of duplication. Every time a position is vacated in management, we certainly look to see if that's absolutely required, but we're not going to get rid of the HR staff. They are important as well.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister informed us previously that AHS has hired 10,000 employees over the last several years,

going from 90,000 to 100,000 staff, making it the fourth-largest corporate entity in the nation. I asked you last year how many of those are front-line workers, to which you replied: 1,500. I reminded you of this question a month ago. Have you since done some research to identify the remaining 8,500 positions that AHS grew in the last seven years, and if they were not front line, why were they more important than front-line services?

Ms Hoffman: There's nothing more important than front-line services. It's also important that front-line services get paid, that they have staff that make sure that their rights are being protected, in terms of providing support staff to those workers as well. I appreciate that the member opposite wants to imply that we could get rid of everyone who works in any office, but the truth is that those people are important, too. Many of them provide important front-line services. Very recently I was at 108th Street, an AHS tower that has tons of mental health professionals that see staff right in that building. Yes, it's an office tower for AHS, but they're also front-line workers, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the work that they do on 108th Street, in every hospital, and in every clinic across our province.

2:30

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, according to the AHS website they now boast of having over 108,000 employees. I'm going to give her a pass on answering about the previous 10,000 hires, but can she explain the 8,000 that have been hired in the last couple of years? I ask this, sir, because Calgarians are still waiting 36 weeks for hip surgery, Albertans are still waiting 46 weeks for cataract surgery, 73 out of 100 children can't access mental health treatment in Edmonton within 30 days, and I have seen no additional staff in any emergency room or operating room.

Ms Hoffman: Well, I don't know where you've been touring, hon. member, but where I've been touring, we're seeing increases. We're seeing important investments to make sure – for example, the EMS budget that this government brought forward has an increase to EMS front-line workers. What did the members opposite do? They voted against that very budget. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? They are calling on us every day to make deep ideological cuts. They did it again at their convention. They want to give \$700 million in tax giveaways to the top 1 per cent. We know what that would do to emergency room wait times. We are working to make sure that we're increasing staff, we're increasing mental health supports, and we're increasing front-line service providers because that supports Albertans.

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

Victims of Crime

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent case of a 28-year-old indigenous woman who was brutally attacked by serial violent offender Lance Blanchard rocked Alberta and highlighted some of the serious concerns within victims' supports. This young victim was thrown in jail, forced to ride back and forth from jail shackled and in the same vehicle as the man who raped and almost murdered her. Given that this woman was not referred to victims' services at all and had no contact with a victims' support worker between June 2014 and 2015, can the government please tell us what they're doing to ensure that this never happens again?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the absolutely important question. I think all members on all sides of this House were incredibly disturbed to learn about that case, as was the public. The government was extremely concerned. That's why we moved expeditiously to launch two different reviews, one performed by an outside agency, by Roberta Campbell, and another one internally to review our policies to ensure that we're doing better as we move forward. We have been working with our partners in victims' services to ensure that we are closing those gaps because, as the member identifies, that was a concern in this case.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The story of this young woman could have ended so differently if she would have had the support system around her in order to help her. This was an overwhelming, terrifying situation. Given that the report mandated by this government following the tragic incident recommended the development of a centralized victims' services mode that operates independently of Edmonton police and the RCMP, has the minister consulted with the relevant stakeholders on this recommendation, and what was the feedback?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the absolutely critical question. We have had the opportunity to speak with our partners in victims' services. We have been dealing with them on a number of recommendations from the office of the Auditor General with respect to the victims of crime fund as well. It is true that Roberta Campbell's report did reference this and suggest a change in the way in which we do business. We have hundreds of volunteers throughout the province working very, very hard to provide those services. Sometimes there are differences in the needs in different rural communities, because of the size sometimes, so . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: The victims of crime fund is meant to be used to help fund and support those that have been impacted by crime, and given that the former Auditor General highlighted that the government had no plan to spend the tens of millions of dollars sitting in surplus in the victims of crime fund for over two years and given that the current amount is \$65 million sitting in that fund, \$30 million earmarked for reserve purposes, and given that the government promised it in the spring of 2018 – Mr. Speaker, it's the spring of 2018 – where's the plan, and when will that be public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the important question. The member is absolutely correct. For over a decade a surplus has been accumulating in that victims of crime fund. When we came into office, the Auditor General was looking at this issue. He made a series of recommendations, and we were looking to move forward on that. Obviously, an intervening event was the report from Ms Campbell, that suggests a move in rather a different direction. We have been consulting with individuals in the area and working with those victim-serving agencies. This file is absolutely critically important, and the government absolutely must get it right.

Service Alberta and Status of Women Minister's Remarks

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a video was circulating showing a terrible racist tirade by a person in, I believe, Lethbridge, the sentiments of which I'm sure we all condemn. The Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women issued a tweet earlier today apparently trying to offer sympathetic context to the racist tirade. Will the government agree with me that this message posted by the minister was unbecoming of a minister of the Crown?

Ms Hoffman: Absolutely, and so does the minister, Mr. Speaker. She has apologized and since removed the remarks, and our government unreservedly apologizes to all Albertans for the remarks that were posted. There is no excuse for racist, bigoted comments in the province of Alberta. Our government is determined to make sure that we combat racism and unreservedly apologizes for the minister's remarks, as she did on the Internet as well just a few minutes ago.

Mr. Kenney: I appreciate that thoughtful response by the hon. the minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that last week the *Edmonton Journal* reported Anti-Semitism on the Rise in Alberta and given that the Minister of Service of Alberta and the Status of Women posted: "This is very concerning. The conservative movement in Alberta and Canada . . . need to be held accountable" for this rise in anti-Semitism, will the government agree with me that such comments are unbecoming of a minister of the Crown?

Ms Hoffman: Those comments were inappropriate, and they were removed. Our minister also apologized.

We are working closely with our friends in the Jewish community, and the Premier was recently recognized for the work with B'nai Brith. We certainly look forward to working with all members of Alberta, and we are fighting to make sure that we have a more just and inclusive society for us all.

Mr. Kenney: I appreciate, again, that answer, Mr. Speaker. Given those comments will the minister undertake to encourage all members of the Assembly, including ministers of the Crown, to avoid divisive remarks publicly in social media that divide people on the basis of race or ethnicity?

Ms Hoffman: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I think all Albertans should be living with a desire to show that they are an accepting, loving, and inclusive society. We certainly are engaging in that work, and we encourage not just all members of the government caucus but all members of this House and all Albertans to do that as well, not just through their remarks or through their outward expressions but also in their thoughts and in their actions. We're going to continue to work to make sure that we have an inclusive Alberta and welcome all Albertans in doing that work in partnership with us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Climate Change and Agriculture

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know producers see first-hand that the climate is changing. This year winter came earlier, and spring came later. We also see extreme storms and unpredictable precipitation. How is the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry helping producers deal with the effects of a changing climate?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Climate change is a growing threat, and it's already having an impact in rural Alberta. As a government we are proud to be taking actions to fight this and to support Albertans through the climate leadership plan. We refuse to leave farmers to deal with this on their own as the problem worsens. The opposition prefers to stick their head in the sand and chooses to ignore this. To ignore climate change means jeopardizing the entire industry.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How is the minister helping producers adapt to climate change and become leaner and cleaner, thereby reducing their emissions and spending fewer hard-earned dollars on fuel, fertilizers, and other high-carbon inputs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We provide substantial support through the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, providing subsidized assistance in the event of extreme weather or market variations. Hundreds of farms benefit from AFSC assistance. As part of our preventive efforts we offer many business support programs to farmers and recently injected \$81 million into energy efficiency programs. Most of this recent funding comes from the carbon levy being reinvested in rural Alberta. We also provide an abundance of expertise through Ag and Forestry department staff on how producers can respond to new issues and make their operations even more efficient.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Beyond programs, how else does your ministry continue to ensure that farms in Alberta continue to be profitable?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, since day one this government has taken a position against the reckless cuts proposed by the opposition. As the climate continues to change, markets shift and new pests and diseases emerge. Farmers need a supportive government now more than ever. If the opposition were making program and insurance decisions in the province, farmers could expect a 20 per cent cut to everything that is available to them now. Ag services boards would see an \$11.4 million cut. It would mean privatizing AFSC, crippling farms with huge hikes in costs and fees. Also, all the opposition could do is to give tax breaks to their rich friends.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with the Routine.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 1, 2017, the Standing Committee on Families and Communities was deemed by the Assembly to be the special committee for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review of the Missing Persons Act pursuant to section 13 of the act. As chair of the committee it is my honour to table five copies of the committee's report of the review of the Missing Persons Act. Copies of the report are also available through the committee office and online.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I would like to give oral notice of a motion for the next Order Paper, that motion being:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Government Motion 16 is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the motion, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have in my hand here five copies of a May 2 Graham Thomson article which refers to the motion that was just talked about, where it says that the opposition may dread the idea of having "such an outspoken truth-speaker as Lorne Gibson" when it comes to the opposition opposing Mr. Lorne Gibson's appointment.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of Controversial Nominee Named for Alberta's First Election Commissioner, Tasked with Rooting Out 'Dark Money.'

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of the mandate letter sent from the Premier to the Minister of Education outlining the work that is to be done to address racism in Alberta and the timeline, which dictates that that work was to be completed by last fall.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article in an obstetrics publication from the Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta; nursing and midwifery in London, U.K.; and advanced specialty health studies, Mount Royal college, Calgary, Alberta. The results: "For women who chose midwifery care, an average savings of \$1172 per course of care was realized without adversely affecting maternal or neonatal outcomes." This is in particular for the Health minister.

Mr. Speaker, I have two more. This is, again, another report done by a medical journal. The conclusions read: "Our findings should reassure health planners and policy makers that there are not deferred excess costs associated with planned home birth with a registered midwife."

One more, Mr. Speaker, this one being from Maternity Care in Alberta, written by the Alberta Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth. The report highlights:

This difference in approach translates into an average cost savings of just over \$540 per in hospital midwifery birth and a savings of \$2,055 for out of hospital births when compared to uncomplicated vaginal birth with an obstetrician. Midwives offer both high quality and continuity of care, relieving some of the burden on the healthcare system while also offering cost savings.

I would like to add that that would be a significant cost savings when multiplied by the number of women in this province that choose a midwife as an option.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies of two articles that I would like to table. The first one is by Dr. Frank Wolak. He's the director of the program on energy and sustainable development. He's also the Holbrook working professor of commodity price studies in the department of economics at Stanford University. He has a PhD from Harvard, and his research focuses on the design and the regulation of energy markets.

The second document I'd like to present is an actual 19-year study of a capacity versus energy-only market on a case study based in the country of Chile, which turns out to be a country where it was fairly easy to separate the two out, and it makes clear that capacity markets are actually more costly and unstable on the grid than just a plain energy-based market.

Thank you.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I have a report here from ATB: Alberta's Still Not the Economic Driver It Once Was. It talks about the annual unemployment rate jumping above the national average in 2017 for the first time since 1988. So much for the talk in this House that there is a recovery. It's a jobless recovery.

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

Mrs. Pitt moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 7: Mr. Feehan]

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

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After 44 years in the political wilderness governing must have looked so easy to the NDP. Sometimes it is. The way forward is clear, the public supports you, and the decisions you make are clear. But as this government has figured out, that's simply not how governing usually works. The decisions are almost never clear, nor are they easy, and there are always unintended consequences. There are enough pitfalls and obstacles for government to avoid that it shouldn't go about creating new ones. But this is exactly what this NDP government did, and I can only conclude that the NDP is so ideologically opposed to market-based electricity generation that it couldn't help itself but start to meddle and muddle about, all in the name of renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the system we had was working, and it was working well. It was the NDP – the NDP – that have made electricity much more expensive. Under the market system the electricity producers held the risk and consumers, Albertans, enjoyed lower prices as a result. A capacity market will make electricity more expensive for consumers by transferring more risk away from generators.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, I found this interesting tidbit on the website of the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO, under the heading Market Basics: Guide to Understanding Alberta's Electricity Market. "The wholesale electricity market in Alberta is currently an 'energy-only' model, meaning that generators are only paid for the energy they produce, not how much they are capable of producing." So we have a system whereby producers are paid for electricity that they produce, and we are moving to a system that pays producers based on how much power they could or might produce.

I believe that Frank Wolak explained it best in his 2004 Stanford University report entitled What's Wrong With Capacity Markets? Dr. Wolak wrote: "Consumers want cars, not automobile assembly plants. They want point-to-point air travel, not airplanes. They want a loaf of bread, not a bakery." When Albertans get up in the morning and turn on the lights, they expect electricity, not the ability and overcapacity to create electricity, Mr. Speaker, and fortunately the electricity market that we had – that we had – successfully delivered Albertans' electricity for the best price. When Albertans turned the light switch on, there was always a steady, reliable current there to ensure that our lights stayed on, our homes were heated, especially on January 15, and our refrigerators kept our food from spoiling.

Before this government came to power, it had long ago decided that it was going to phase out coal and shutter our most efficient, cleanest burning power plants decades – decades – ahead of the federal government's deadline. The existing federal deadline had Alberta phasing out 12 of our coal-fired generating plants by 2029. We knew this wouldn't cause much volatility because we had planned for it and the generating plants were nearing the end of their lives in many cases anyway. What the NDP did was demand, insist, force six of the newest and most efficient coal power plants to be shuttered well before the federal agreement allowed. Some of these coal plants, Mr. Speaker, were practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run to 2061, Genesee 3 to 2055.

This ideological decision cost Albertans \$1.4 billion just so that we can shut these coal plants early and convert them to natural gas. Mr. Speaker, I shudder to think that with our system now headed toward 70 per cent reliance on natural gas electricity generation – that's a complete redundancy necessary for the NDP government's plan to have 30 per cent renewables, so another 30 per cent, where natural gas will be the backup – our youth, our families, and our communities are so subject to volatility if the price of natural gas doubles, triples. And it's been there in the past.

On top of that cost is the fact that coal to natural gas conversion is not as efficient as brand new natural gas power plants. We could have transitioned our system to natural gas over the long term by having new gas-only plants replace coal plants as these coal-powered plants ended their life cycle in 2061 and 2055. Instead, we are left with a more expensive option and less efficient gas power plants. No matter which way you slice this, we are going to end up paying more, receiving less, and driving Albertan industry, billions of dollars of wealth and tens of thousands of jobs, out of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, what is more, a full accounting has not yet been done. No one knows just how much the NDP's poor decision-making has cost or will cost Albertans. The United Conservative Party Official Opposition has written the Auditor General requesting that his office investigate, with a full-cost accounting of the NDP's electricity fiasco and report back to the Legislature. Albertans, taxpayers, communities, and our youth deserve to know exactly what this NDP boondoggle is going to cost them.

What's even more mind blowing is that AESO's own modelling showed that this government's renewable electricity program

would actually decrease the overall revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit. Mr. Speaker, what does that mean in layman's terms? What it means is less investment in our electricity generation system, less reliability, and higher prices, a no-win everywhere for Albertans.

In his 2016 report to government the AESO said:

Without investment in new firm generation . . . to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

System reliability will be compromised in the middle of July, in the middle of January. It's amazing that we are subjecting ourselves and our families to this.

Despite this warning the government charged ahead and legislated that the electricity system must have 30 per cent renewables anyway. The NDP purposely compromised what was a world-class, sustainable, and reliable electricity system for an ideological fool's errand. Without guaranteeing that natural gas peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow, the government has completely, on their own, manufactured the need for a capacity market.

Mr. Speaker, if the government had continued to do nothing in response to their invasive meddling, the \$1,000 per megawatt hour cap on electricity prices would have had to rise to \$5,000 per megawatt hour just to attract the investment needed to make the system reliable. The NDP have now given Albertans a choice, a choice between high electricity prices and high risk or higher electricity prices with lower risk. What a terrible choice, all because they have tried to force renewables into the market and close coal-powered plants early.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, governing is tough. Often the choice is between two bad options, and you have to choose the one that's less bad. However, this government created the situation, created the bad options, where the people of Alberta are left with two bad choices. They did have a choice not to meddle in the electricity generating system in the first place, a choice they should have made, could have made, but didn't. We are where we are because this government couldn't help but make an irresponsible, ideologically based decision that is not in the best interests of Albertans.

This all could have been avoided. It's incredibly upsetting and exasperating to see Alberta in this position when it all so easily could have been avoided. I don't support this government's irresponsible and ideological meddling in what was a perfectly reliable and inexpensive electricity generation system, a system now, Mr. Speaker, where the costs will be billions and billions of extra dollars for years and years down the road and a loss of reliability. It was a perfectly reliable and inexpensive electricity generation system, and I certainly do not support their attempts to hide their bad decisions from Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against this bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Just to confirm that it's under 29(2)(a)?

Ms Phillips: Yes. Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of half-baked statements in the hon. member's comments; in fact, when it comes to renewables, probably a baker's dozen worth of mistruths and misstatements.

But, you know, we'll start with the phase-out of coal. The member claims that they are efficient and the cleanest burning, perhaps, of coal, but we have a number of lower emission ways to generate electricity in this province. I'm wondering if the hon. member is not looking at those because he simply doesn't believe in the science of climate change, that greenhouse gas emissions actually do cause anthropogenic climate change, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the hon. member has gone on the record several times indicating that he does not understand the science of climate change, so I'm wondering if that's what's behind some of his statements.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, leaving aside climate change for a moment, you know, when his own leader was part of the cabinet that gazetted the regulations to phase out coal, in there there were statements around the hundreds of millions of dollars that would be saved in the health care budget due to phasing out those plants. I'm wondering if the hon. member would restart the coal plants, or if it is in fact the position of the Conservatives that they would restart those coal plants and take on all of that pollution and those health care effects. That's not some kind of hoax perpetrated by the Chinese, as the hon. member seems to think that climate change is. The health care costs and the effects of burning coal are well documented. If he has questions about that, then he can ask his own leader because he sat in cabinet, the same cabinet that gazetted those regulations. Those facts are right there for him to see. Or he could go and talk to any health care provider, emergency room doctor, the asthma society of Canada, for example, a number of other folks, the Lung Association and others.

I'm wondering if they will reverse those agreements, Mr. Speaker, if they would commit to doing that. I'm wondering if they would commit to reversing the capacity market. This is something that if you want to talk about uncertainty and investor uncertainty, this would send all of that investment capital that is looking at new natural gas investments, looking at options in hydro, looking at the renewables climate into quite a tailspin. I'm wondering if the Conservatives can go on the record right now and commit to reversing the capacity market.

I'd also like to ask, given that there were so many misstatements – and you can't glaze them over; they were just wrong – around renewables in there, if the hon. member would like to go on the record and reject the thousands of new jobs that are coming into his riding and into his economic region as a result of the lowest cost procurement of renewables in Canadian history, Mr. Speaker, that are directly benefiting his own constituents.

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

Mr. Barnes: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my hon. colleague the minister for rising and being involved in the debate. I guess where I want to start is that the Alberta government's year-end is March 31, and our government put in a system where the ratepayer is capped, capped at 6.8 cents. But capped by who is what's important. Capped by the taxpayer. Subsidized by the taxpayer. What's amazing to me: the ratepayer has a cap, meaning the most they'll pay is 6.8 cents for the cost of their electricity, but the poor taxpayer doesn't have a cap. If the cost of electricity goes through the roof, the taxpayer and the ratepayer, who are often the same thing, will just end up paying the higher cost of this NDP boondoggle but in a more indirect, inefficient, noncompetitive way.

Mr. Speaker, why I mention March 31 is that I think it was April 8, and already the taxpayer was subsidizing the ratepayer in the province of Alberta. I think it was \$8 million or \$9 million.

Mr. Panda: \$9 million.

Mr. Barnes: Nine million dollars. Thank you. Eight days into our year. Already this capacity, this boondoggle of a system that the NDP government put in, had resulted in the hard-working youth, the hard-working job providers, the hard-working wealth creators of our province having to dig into their pockets in an unintended way and pay, pay for the cost of this boondoggle, pay for the cost of this fast, ideologically driven I want to call it overexposure to natural gas. As I mentioned in my comments . . . [Mr. Barnes' speaking time expired]

Thank you.

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take some time today to talk on Bill 13 here, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. Of course, as usual the government has come up with a good name to describe their bill and all sorts of rosy outlooks because of this bill. But let's be certain about one thing. Everything this government has done having to do with electricity has been a failure. This government from the start, when they increased the carbon tax and started the shutdown of coal, everything they have done has caused problems in the electricity market. We've seen the problems with the Balancing Pool and the companies returning their contracts to the Balancing Pool and how the government had to pass legislation in order to bail out the Balancing Pool. Every single thing this government has touched has either damaged the electricity market or has been to try to fix the problems that they've created by the bills that they initially passed.

There's one thing we can be certain of, Mr. Speaker. The prices of electricity are going up. There's only one way that this ideology goes, and that drives electricity costs up. We've seen it happen in Ontario in huge ways, and this government seems to be wanting to go down the same path. Now, it's crazy to me to think that we have such an energy-rich province here in Alberta, and this government is talking about importing energy from other areas. This doesn't make any sense.

Now, another thing that doesn't make sense is that this government talks about, you know, wind power, generating electricity from the wind. They talk about it like it's something that's never been done in Alberta. That's just not true. There've been wind generators in Alberta for years. In fact, some of the first ones that were started are actually being decommissioned now because they've fulfilled their lifespan. It's just amazing to me that this government comes up with these things like it's some new, incredible revelation that's never happened before, and it's just not true. It's been going on, but this government wants to push ahead and force the market to do what it wouldn't do naturally. Of course, when you do things like that, somebody has to pay. Who's going to pay, Mr. Speaker? Albertans are going to pay for this. When natural gas plants that are producing electricity are shut down, presently they cost nothing to Albertans, but under this plan when they're shut down, Albertans will still be paying for them. Albertans will be paying whether these plants are working or not.

Now, the only thing we're certain of, of course, is that prices will be getting more expensive. We've seen this already. This government has brought in a cap on the price of electricity, but they put it in at over twice the price of what it is. Obviously, there was an expectation that the prices were going to double or more in order to have any benefit of a cap. Of course, Mr. Speaker, what happens when the cap is reached? What happens then? If the companies need to charge that much money to make a profit or to keep going, when they hit the cap, who's going to pay for it then? Who's going to pay

for that electricity to keep coming in? Well, it doesn't matter whether Albertans are paying for electricity or whether they're paying a tax that's funnelled back into these companies generating this electricity. It's still the same people that are paying. That's Albertans.

This government has to quit trying to convince Albertans that there's some magic here that creates a situation where they put a cap on it and all of a sudden it just doesn't cost anymore. It still costs. If the company has to have a return on the investment higher than that cap, then somebody has got to pay for it. Of course, there is only one person paying for electricity in Alberta, and that's Albertans. This will result in paying for electrical generating capacity that is not being used. Whether the electricity is being generated, the power is going to be paid for; that capacity is going to be paid for.

Now, AESO demands a 15 per cent reserve margin, and of course wind and solar cannot be used to factor into this margin. You know, these other things, wind and solar, can't be factored into that because they're not dependable. Solar doesn't work when it's dark, and wind doesn't work when it's not blowing. So there are several issues with this situation that we find ourselves in, and, again, it all started because of this government's ideology of driving through the electricity market and thinking that they can force fixes on the economy.

3:10

I think we all agree that there could be some tweaks made and some fixes made, but this government has decided to change the fundamental way electricity is generated and distributed in Alberta. That's just a dangerous road to go on, especially when they don't fully understand the market. They didn't understand that these contracts were returned to the Balancing Pool. They didn't understand that. They just thought: oh, that's no big deal. Well, it turned into a big deal. The contracts were returned; the government sues the energy companies. That's a pretty big deal, especially when some of these energy companies were owned by Albertans. Then we have the Alberta government suing another Alberta-owned, taxpayer-owned company. There's just a double whammy when it comes to the effects of a government that can't see how the market works and feels that they can just run roughshod over everybody and force everything to happen when, really, these things are intricately related.

Now, Bill 13 amends the Renewable Electricity Act to make FEOC not applicable to renewables. FEOC is the rules of fair, efficient, and openly competitive electricity markets. This bill wants to take away rules of fair, efficient, and openly competitive electricity markets. Now, for a government that pretends to be open and transparent, they bring in legislation to remove that, especially when it comes to renewables. It places merchant wind and potentially future renewable electricity projects at risk by doing that. Mr. Speaker, I mean, I don't understand how this government feels that taking away rules of fair, efficient, and openly competitive electricity markets is somehow going to benefit Albertans.

Now, the NDP government announced the creation of a capacity market in November 2016. Bill 13 is not about renewables per se. It's about financing coal-to-gas conversions, new natural gas generation, combined-cycle gas, and backup for renewables, which is simple-cycle gas in peaker plants. Bill 13 attempts to fix the mess from the coal phase-out, that is making the grid unstable with 30 per cent renewables under Bill 27. The AESO contracts renewables capacity through a bid process. Mr. Speaker, I mean, obviously, again, this is a situation where the government's previous bills have created problems. Of course, we come up with another bill to try to fix those problems. Obviously, there should have been more

thought, more consultation, and more listening to opposition and to other people in the market before they started down this road.

Now, we talked about that with the capacity market the retail electricity prices would be capped at 6.8 cent per kilowatt hour until 2021. Of course, that's not part of this bill, but if retail rates exceed that amount, the Alberta government will use carbon tax revenues to pay the difference. This government is somehow trying to convince Albertans that they're going to be saving money if they put a cap on the electricity rates. Of course, we see that this government is going to use the carbon tax revenues to pay the difference. Well, Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is a tax on Albertans. Albertans pay the carbon tax. So suggesting that they're saving the money of Albertans by putting a cap on electricity rates and then paying the difference with Albertans' tax dollars doesn't save Albertans any money. It doesn't make things any better because it still costs Albertans.

There is \$74 million set aside in the budget for this year to do this. They've already planned that this is going to happen. They already know what's going to happen. They know that the price is going to go up. They know that it's going to go up above their cap. They know that they're going to have to take taxpayer dollars to fund this, to subsidize this process that they've undergone.

Now, the three generators who won phase 1 of the renewable electricity program are not eligible for capacity payments, only electricity payments, so when the price goes above 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, these generators pay into the government. When the price goes below 3.7 cents, the government pays these wind farms from the carbon tax.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we have this situation where the government is taking Albertans' tax dollars and putting them into electricity. They've changed these rules, and they've tried to get all these different things going within electricity, with all the bills they've passed, without fully understanding what the effects are. Now we have a situation where, when the price is below 3.7 cents, the government pays the wind farms from the carbon tax. I mean, we've had wind farms here in Alberta for years, but now, of course, we have a government that figures that they have to take taxpayer dollars to make these things work.

Now, again, it's very clear that the NDP have made electricity more expensive, and it's going to go higher. What's happening is that it's transferring more risk away from the generators, but somebody has to pay, and the only person to pay is Albertans. I don't know how Albertans can have any trust in this NDP government when it comes to electricity because we've seen over and over again the cause-and-effect reaction of their bills and their legislation that they pass here.

Now, we've written to the Auditor General asking for a full-cost accounting of the NDP's electricity fiasco. I think Albertans deserve to know. They deserve to know how much this is costing. If they're going to suggest that the people of Alberta want this – and this is what they're saying, that Albertans want this, that this is the road that Albertans want them to go down – I don't know how Albertans can make a decision on whether they want this or not unless they know what the full cost is, unless they have all the facts. You can't make an informed decision without information. Mr. Speaker, this is, again, this government not wanting to provide all the information to Albertans so that they can make a decision on their own.

Now, we've given them plenty of opportunity. A lot of times we've given them opportunity to send these bills to committee so that we could gather more information. More people could present to the government and to opposition in a committee setting so that we could learn this information, and they could have input on the actual effects of this. But any time we ask for that to happen, the

government, of course, votes against it. They feel that they know everything, that they know better than everybody else, so they don't want to listen to anything more. They don't want to hear the truth, I guess. They just want to push ahead with their ideology and push ahead with these multiple bills that have caused damage to Albertans.

Now, Alberta was to phase out 12 coal-fired generating plants as per a federal agreement by 2029. Mr. Speaker, those coal-fired generating plants are ones that were reaching the end of their life. They were going to be shut down anyways, and that was kind of a bit of a natural progression. But when this government comes along and they decide that they're going to not only shut down those 12 but shut down the other six, the newer ones, the ones that are burning pretty clean and the ones that haven't had their life cycle run out on them, then that's what costs millions and millions of dollars. Again, who pays the millions and millions of dollars to shut down these coal-fired generating plants early? Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud under 29(2)(a).

3:20

Dr. Turner: Under 29(2)(a). I've been quite anxious, actually, to get a chance to participate in debate on this very important Bill 13. Bill 13 is actually going to enable the capacity market to function the way it was designed to do. I think it's been one of the great accomplishments of this government to get the capacity market in place, and this legislation is designed to make sure that it operates in the best way.

Now, there's a lot of hot air coming from the other side. That's a trite sort of a comment, but I think it's appropriate on this one. I want the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky to think about a few years ago, when there were rolling brownouts across this province. The city of Calgary, I think, was particularly affected by that, but even Edmonton was affected by it. I don't know if Grande Prairie suffered from it. I imagine they might have. Those brownouts actually were happening – I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you experienced them in Medicine Hat although you've got an excellent electricity provider in the city of Medicine Hat, that maybe was able to avoid it. The way that the energy-only market was working in this province meant that some of the providers of electricity, actually, for their own economic benefit – they called it economic withholding – shut down power plants, and the government of Alberta had absolutely no way to ensure that that didn't happen.

I'm sure the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky remembers those brownouts. I'd like him to comment on whether or not his reaction to it is to go back to this energy-only market – he thinks the capacity market is the wrong way to go – whether or not we would actually be plunged back into those horrible summers of brownouts, when the air conditioning wouldn't work, when perhaps the air conditioning in his farm buildings would shut down because the power wasn't being supplied.

The other thing that I'd like to have him comment on – and he was talking about this at length towards the end of his comments – is the coal phase-out. I think it's one of the smartest things that the Conservative Party of Canada did when they were in power in Ottawa. They actually started it, and the leader of the UCP was part of the cabinet that decided that it was very important to speed up the phase-out of coal-powered electricity because of the health costs. I can tell you as a physician that those health costs are real. It causes problems with the health of all Albertans. It costs us money.

So on those two topics I'd like to hear the member's comments.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. Speaking of hot air, I guess we do hear a lot of hot air from the other side on a lot of these issues. We have a government, again, that doesn't want to provide the facts to Albertans so Albertans can make decisions. You talked about rolling brownouts. Well, the same thing happens in capacity markets, too. The problem with the renewables is that the sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow, so you have to have backup. There are extra costs there, but there is also extra risk there.

Now, again, with the coal phase-out – he talks about the coal phase-out – well, why don't we get the facts to the people and let them decide, you know? It cost \$1.36 billion to shut down these coal plants early, and this is even the newer plants that they want to shut down. Some of these plants were supposed to run until 2061. Genesee 3 was supposed to run to 2055. Of course, that's why it cost so much money to shut these plants down. Again, these are newer plants that are burning very clean.

I guess I don't understand why this government – we've asked for dollar figures on the cost of their electricity experiments that they're doing. Of course, I would presume that they've done some sort of study. If they hadn't, of course, that's very irresponsible. But, obviously, if they have these numbers, then provide them to us. Provide them to Albertans. Let's see them.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this Bill 13, Alberta's electricity future, in second reading. In a few short years this NDP government's strict attachment to its ideology – and we can see that time and time again decisions are not made here based on rationale. Rather, it's on ideology, the way this government thinks and presumes that everything that has happened in Alberta was wrong before they came along. That's what they think. They have taken our electricity system down I don't even know which route, this wild ride, that creates a new mess at every turn in trying to create something.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the April 19, 2018, edition of the *National Post*, from a column by Kevin Libin.

Get ready, Alberta, because all the thrills and spills that inevitably follow when politicians start meddling in a boring but perfectly well-functioning electricity market in the name of pointless political symbolism are coming your way, next.

Well, this next step of political symbolism is Bill 13, which creates a capacity market to fix a multitude of NDP redesigns already.

We see many problems with this bill, not the least of which are the details for creating this new market in regulations. As we all know in this House, Mr. Speaker, that means that the NDP government, which has made such a mess of our system already, can do more shocking changes behind closed doors. You know what that means? It means that the legislators, who supposedly craft these rules, will learn about it at the same time as Albertans would. The NDP would just craft their own rules without consulting the stakeholders. I think history is on my side when I say that. The failure of this government to consult with the stakeholders on a number of other occasions: I don't think anybody can argue that. For those consumers, Mr. Speaker, the NDP changes so far have meant more government debt, to the tune of billions of dollars, and higher rates down the road for a long time.

It's not that the concept of a capacity market is bad. It is that regardless of the electricity market, electricity prices will go up. This NDP government repeatedly tells us that it is fighting for Albertan families and that it's making Alberta better for families and that they've got their backs. How is it possible when they

continue to play games with our perfectly run system which cost billions of taxpayers' dollars and which result in higher rates?

Mr. Speaker, let me say that the carbon tax does not help families either. We still have not seen any study presented by this government pertaining to the carbon tax. They have taken – I don't know – hundreds of millions of dollars from hard-working Albertans, and they still have to show what the impact of that is and the greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Well, I'd rather stick to Bill 13.

The carbon tax does not help families. We all know that. This supposedly caring, progressive NDP government has generated a regressive electricity system. The Member for Calgary-Glenmore spoke very passionately about their progressive government. When 200,000 people are sitting at home without work, I don't think that's progress. Like, 14 per cent of youth are sitting at home. I don't think that is progress, Mr. Speaker. A \$96 billion debt we're passing to the future generation: in my humble opinion, I don't think that's progress by any stretch of the imagination.

3:30

Again let's go back to Bill 13. After this bill, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are simply shaking their heads at it and saying: "Like, what is going on? What is this government up to again now?" They can't keep up with the changes this government brings. On this side of the House the Conservatives have been, like, blowing the whistle on the NDP's interference in our complex electricity system from the beginning, but they simply dismissed our concerns, and they dismissed Albertans' concerns because they think they always know best. I understand. They can dismiss our concerns. Like, you know, we're partisan parties. That's their duty, to ignore us. But they should not be ignoring the concerns of the people who sent us here.

We warned them not to introduce the carbon tax and apply it to heavy emitters. I mean, like, they never listen, so they forged on and moved, triggered a clause that allowed now unprofitable companies to hand back their power purchasing agreements. The NDP appeared to be taken by surprise that this was even a possibility. Lawsuits ensued – and they are not cheap, Mr. Speaker; I'm sure you came across a few lawsuits, like, in private life or something; I definitely have – in a short period of time, that we all predicted would come to pass and had to come to pass.

All that Albertans really know is that the unnecessarily purely ideological move is costing taxpayers a fortune, and it's a multibillion-dollar fortune. Albertans know that the only party to blame here is the New Democratic Party, the NDP. Most Albertans don't know more than that. That's all they know, that the NDP is creating this mess and that they're going to blame them. They don't feel the need to move more than that. They're not happy with the changes, especially in this thing.

When they hear about yet another change to fix the last one that went wrong, they just roll their eyes, like: "You know what? We just can't wait for our chance to, you know, make our voice heard," especially the hard-working people in Calgary-Greenway, Mr. Speaker. Every time I'm stopping at Tim Hortons or getting gas at Petro or something, they're just, like, "When is the next election?" I'm, like: "I don't know. That's up to the government, right?" Albertans are ready for that. We feel that it is our job, until that occurs, to continue to be the best guardians we can as opposition, to hold this government to account, and we need to guard their hard-earned tax money, which this government is trying to take every opportunity they get. We need to guard their lifestyle, and we need to protect the future of the province they love so dearly. They helped build this province.

Anyways, let's get back to the repercussions of Bill 13, Mr. Speaker. I've only mentioned one of the many interferences in the market that have brought us to this state of looking at the capacity market. If you remember, Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, was brought forward despite the warning from AESO that it would compromise the electricity system. And what happened? The NDP chose not to allow for a guarantee that the peaker plant would be built to produce electricity when renewables were not co-operating. You know, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky said that the sun and the wind: we know that they're not always working. The sun is not always shining. The wind is not always blowing. That's why the industry has been calling for a capacity market.

If all of this sounds like echoes of the Ontario market to you, Mr. Speaker, you are correct. We have all seen the electricity prices in Ontario. I remember, like, when the Prime Minister was doing a town hall, and this hard-working lady at the town hall – most Canadians would have seen the video – was basically crying and saying that she cannot afford to pay her utility bills. This seems like we're on the same path.

Mr. Kevin warned about this problem, too, in the same column I quoted from earlier, and let me do it again. "Whenever progressive politics infests the electrical grid, people always pay for it in the end." That was Mr. Kevin's comment. He notes that people either pay through their power rates, or they pay it through their taxes.

The NDP makes it all sound great, with the rate caps and such, but if the rates are capped, the money has to come from somewhere. That means that this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, slides into another pocket to pay for its experiment. Last month I think it's, like, \$9 million if my memory is correct, and the government has put aside \$76 million for the whole year.

Now, the government's talk about, you know, building schools and building infrastructure – I mean, a simple question to all of us: how many teachers can we hire with \$75 million? How many schools can we build? Well, they all would, say, like, average \$40 million to \$50 million, depending on the size and location, each school that can be built. So why are we throwing this money away rather than putting the taxpayers' money towards the infrastructure this government claims that we need? We do need that infrastructure.

So it just tacks onto it. It's a \$54 billion debt, which we all know will be close to, like, \$100 billion by the time of the next term under this NDP government. Even for those who expected an NDP government to be costly and did not care about the origins of the funds, it is so reckless. This NDP government has been tragic for Alberta, even the people who thought, like: "Okay. We can look at Manitoba. We can look at, like, the late '90s in British Columbia. We can look at before the Saskatchewan Party." In Saskatchewan people say, like: wherever this style of government goes, they just, like, mess things up. Even they are saying: wow; this is beyond our expectation.

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to wrap it up. In the end, what I would like to do is, like – you know, we're hoping that when it comes to Bill 13, this government will give it another thought and try to do the right thing for the taxpayers and Albertans. We'll find out shortly if they really care to protect Albertans because right on their website it says: fighting to protect what is important for you and your family. That's their website, on the Alberta NDP site. So if you really claim and believe in that, let's do the right thing and put the partisan politics aside and start actually serving the hard-working people of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Greenway? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

3:40

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I enjoyed listening to my colleague's comments here on some of the problems with the electricity market and the NDP's, you know, plans, that have changed things fundamentally and, obviously, cost Albertans more. He mentioned about the coal-fired generating plants being shut down. I think it's important to note that coal conversion to natural gas is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas plants. Of course, by forcing these companies to shut down early the coal-fired part of their plants, they're somewhat forced to try to recover some money out of that investment. So instead of waiting for the life cycle of the plant to run out and then just building new plants, they're encouraged by this program to build less efficient generating plants using natural gas.

Regardless, it seemed like the NDP wanted to force the renewable electricity on the Alberta market. But AESO ran many models, including for high use of intermittent renewables to generate electricity in Alberta, and what this modelling showed is that the renewable electricity program will decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recover investment and earn a profit, thus deterring investment.

Mr. Speaker, by deterring investment – that's something that, we've seen, is a recurring theme in Alberta here since this government has been involved with governing this province. They seem to be always meddling with things and always causing stress in the investment community, and therefore the investment just doesn't want to come here to Alberta. These people are still investing money. They're just investing it somewhere else, not in Alberta. We keep warning the government about these things, about the messages they send the investment community. Of course, when the investment community spends money in Alberta, it creates jobs, and these jobs, of course, make life better for Alberta. This government talks about making life better for Alberta, but of course they don't. They bring in things like the carbon tax. They increase the cost of electricity. They do all these things that do anything but make life better for Albertans.

You know, I just want to hear my colleague talk again about some of these additional costs that are affecting Albertans and how this meddling with the electricity market is causing problems for Albertans.

They do something, they bring in the carbon tax, they send all these shock waves into the investment community, and of course every time they meddle with something, there are unintended consequences. Now, they're always warned about the consequences of what they do, but they never seem to listen. They just bulldoze ahead anyway. If it fits into their ideology, they bulldoze ahead, and if it doesn't fit your ideology, then you send it to committee to die. That seems to be the way this government operates. I think we have, you know, a problem here, and we need to make sure that as this government moves ahead with the different bills and legislation, it doesn't have these unintended consequences. Over and over, Mr. Speaker, we try to warn the government. We try to have things go to committee so that there can be more input, so that this government can have an opportunity to learn the full effects of their legislation.

With that, I would just like to have the hon. member kind of respond to that and his opinions and his thoughts on that issue. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky. You're right, sir. Albertans are actually getting frustrated with this government's unintended

consequences in anything they do, basically. I mean, I just touched on one saga, its ideological experiment with Alberta's electrical system, but there are many, many more.

I mean, like, let's look at the climate change plan. It's another experiment that has baffled and infuriated Albertans. The root of it, of course, is the carbon tax. We still have to see the study of, you know, what it has caused environmentally. What kind of gain it has caused we still have to see. Mr. Speaker, Albertans are waiting to put a delete button on it because that's what the hard-working people in Calgary-Greenway tell me. They're, like: why do I have this carbon tax on my bill? One of my friends actually is in the towing business. He had to pass that tax . . .

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. The bill before us today is a very important bill as far as my constituency is concerned, but in order to address the issues that are found in Bill 13 and how it's affected my constituency, I believe it's necessary to place this bill into the context of what has happened over the last two or three years in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta was going to phase out 12 coal-fired generating power plants as per federal agreement by 2029. Instead, the New Democratic government here has decided that it would phase out the additional six remaining coal-fired power plants that would have operated past 2029. They have decided to phase them out early. This decision has not only negatively affected the coal and the electricity workers in my constituency but also businesses like Capital Power, also at a cost to all Albertans. The NDP have cost us approximately \$1.36 billion in their attempt to shut down these coal plants early and to convert them to natural gas.

Today I had the pleasure of attending the annual general meeting of ATCO Canadian Utilities. At that AGM they talked about the fact of having to shut down their Sheerness power plant. While it was going to shut down earlier than, say, the Genesee power plant in my constituency, there was still going to be significant cost to the early shutdown of that facility. Indeed, some of these coal plants that are going to be shut down are practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run till about 2061 and Genesee 3 to 2055. That's a continued and long lifespan that was going to go past 2030, and the costs of stranding those assets are going to be significant.

The decision of the NDP government to move away from coal-fired generation to generation of electricity by natural gas and/or renewable energy generation like wind or solar power has greatly impacted my constituency. Currently in my constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon I have the Genesee power plant. That's a coal-generated power plant. It's not just a power plant but one of the most efficient coal-burning electrical power plants in the world, so efficient that I'm aware of engineers that have come to my constituency from Germany, engineers that have visited and have studied the technology in this coal-burning power plant and are using that as a template to go back to Germany and begin transitioning away from nuclear energy and away from the renewable energy that they have pursued in Germany to this point, to go back to a stable, low-cost coal energy source. Ironical, isn't it?

I've toured Westmoreland Coal, that provides the coal for the Genesee power plant. I've seen the jobs that are created there by this mine, and I've seen the land reclamation that they have so diligently applied in my constituency. I've gone to the meetings of the workers that have been so concerned with how they are going to transition out of the jobs in coal, how they're going to try to transition and find new jobs and take care of their families in doing so. All of this economic and this personal pain is because this

government has decided to transition early to natural gas and renewables, by 2030.

3:50

This government has tried to justify their actions by claiming that shutting down coal will greatly improve the health of the people of Alberta. Yet, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency is the West Central Airshed Society. It was created after the Lodgepole blowout in the 1980s. They have continuously monitored the air in my constituency for well over 30 years. I have gone to their meetings, and I have looked at their annual reports, and what we've seen is that in fact the air has never been better than it is today in my constituency. We have in fact quintupled the amount of oil and gas and coal activity in my constituency over the past 30 years, yet today we have better air quality than we had 30-plus years ago. It's not my opinion; this is science. In fact, the air monitoring shows us that the air quality meets or beats all of the ambient air quality standards in Alberta.

The fact that phasing out Alberta's coal-generated power plants reflects a large portion of Alberta's electrical generation and capacity does not seem to register with this government. The fact that all of this economic pain to generate electricity by natural gas only marginally improves the reduction of greenhouse gas production and will have little to no effect on climate change does not seem to register with this government. The fact that we were already on track to phase out coal and that companies like Capital Power already had a plan for phasing out coal in an economical way that would provide a stable source of electricity to this province has yet to seem to have any impact on the actions of this government. This is the backstory of Bill 13 in my constituency. In my constituency it's all economic pain for no discernible environmental gain.

So what is Bill 13 going to do? Well, the New Democratic Party government here announced the creation of a capacity market in November 2016. We presently have an energy-only market which produces our electricity. Electricity-producing companies are paid solely based on the provision of the electricity that is consumed in an hourly wholesale market. This is an efficient system. It has produced some of the lowest energy prices for Albertans in North America. But the NDP have decided to move away from an energy-only market towards a capacity market.

Now, in a capacity market the companies that produce electricity are paid for the provision of energy in an hourly market and for the potential to generate electricity; in other words, a payment for potential generation at some point in the future. Supporters of a capacity market believe that a capacity market will ensure that there is sufficient investment in new generation capacity to keep the lights on and to reduce the price swings in the wholesale electricity market.

Bill 13 is really about financing coal-to-gas conversions, creating new natural gas generation and backup generation for renewable energy sources like wind and solar, that are nonbaseload sources of energy, or, in other words, peak power, therefore the need to provide simple-cycle gas or peaker plants.

Bill 13 is an attempt to fix up the mess that they've made of the coal phase-out, that has made the grid unstable and would make the grid unstable, by the setting of a 30 per cent renewable energy goal under Bill 27. The problem is that the renewable energy that the NDP have pursued, solar and wind, is peak power and cannot replace the baseload power of coal-generated electrical plants. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we cannot replace 30 per cent of Alberta's power supply with peak power like solar and wind and still maintain a stable electrical grid for Albertans.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I sometimes wonder where the NDP is going. I've had very good conversations with the Member for Leduc-Beaumont and with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Because we share some of the same school boards, et cetera, we come into contact with each other quite often. It's a bit of a mystery to me. I'd love to be able to understand why the New Democrat government is not prepared to look at geothermal energy, which is baseload energy. I have been able to see from the figures from companies that have come to me and have proposed this to me where they are able to produce electricity from the heat energy of the ground, do so without government subsidies, and meet that 30 per cent energy from renewable resources yet from a baseload power source.

I just finished going to the ATCO Canadian Utilities AGM, where they were talking about taking solar and wind power – one of the problems with solar and wind is that you can't store the energy when it's not needed. When you've got wind power going at night, the energy is not needed. Yet they have been working in Australia on looking at taking that excess energy and putting it into hydrogen and then using abandoned pipelines to store the hydrogen, which is simply just a battery. That makes more sense than what we're doing here.

The hydroelectric dam that I have in my constituency is going to be building a second channel where they can take that same electrical energy that's being produced by renewables like solar and wind and use it to pump the water back into a second channel, where it can be used essentially as a battery to create energy again. That makes more sense than what this government is doing.

Bill 13 has significant problems. The energy direction that this NDP government has taken has created significant problems, that they're trying to address through Bill 13. As a result of the coal-fired generation phase-out and the push for renewable generation the NDP have significantly compromised the reliability of our electrical system. Therefore, in order to attract the necessary investment to replace the baseload lost from the coal and for future growth, Bill 13 will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market. Mr. Speaker, the first step will be to auction off to companies a percentage of the energy market that each company will produce and at what price they will produce their energy in order to provide the electrical energy that Albertans will need. The capacity auction is targeted for late 2019, with the capacity market to be fully operational, in theory, by 2021.

Now, until the capacity market comes in, retail electricity prices will be and have been capped at 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour until 2021. If retail prices exceed that amount, that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, then this government has said that they will use the carbon tax revenues to pay for the difference in the price. That's why when we take a look at the budget that they have presented this year, Mr. Speaker, they have put aside \$74,310,000 – set aside in the budget this year – to cover the costs should they exceed the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, money that would not have to have been there had we stayed with an electricity market for . . .

4:00

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I was enjoying the comments from my colleague on these electricity boondoggles that this government has brought forward and the additional cost that it's costing Albertans. I guess I wanted to kind of touch on something here on AESO. We were talking earlier about how AESO ran many models, including high use of intermittent

renewables like wind and solar, of course, to generate electricity in Alberta. This AESO modelling showed that the decrease in revenue needed for all generation to recoup investment and earn a profit would deter investment.

Now, in October 2016 AESO created a report that said that system reliability will also be compromised. It says:

Without investment in new firm generation . . . to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

Mr. Speaker, that's not from the Official Opposition; that's from AESO. That's who has done that report, and that's what their findings were.

When we look at what this government is doing and how they're ramming through this legislation and doing all these things that have hurt Albertans and hurt Albertans' pocketbooks with the renewables, what was the government's response to this AESO report? Well, Bill 27 was introduced in November 2016 and set the target for 30 per cent renewables.

Mr. Speaker, here we have a situation where the government has received good information from an organization that's not a political organization. It's not a partisan organization. They've received information from this organization. What did they do? They just ignored it. They just bulldozed past it. It doesn't fit their ideology, so: "We're going ahead with what we think. We're not going to listen to anybody. We're not going to listen to common sense or anything of the sort. We're going to do what we want."

The NDP purposefully compromised the electrical system's reliability and did this without a guarantee that the peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. That, of course, created the need for the capacity market. Because of this government's plans that they've decided to push ahead, that's what's created the situation where all of a sudden they need to do the capacity market.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I just want my colleague to kind of respond to that and to just give us a bit of an idea of what his feelings are as far as how this government has bulldozed ahead with this and not listened to organizations that have provided good advice for them. We'll just have him respond on that.

Thanks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for his question here. You know, I think that's probably one of the things that's most worrisome here. When this government gets information from nonpartisan sources like AESO, like the West Central Airshed Society, sources that don't rely on the opposition – obviously, they're not going to pay a whole lot of attention to the opposition – they simply won't pay any attention to those nonpartisan sources that know a whole lot more about this issue than members of the government do.

When AESO suggests that you're not going to have the financial capacity there to encourage people to continue building peaker plants and to be able to deal with the drop in energy production because of the wind and the solar problems and you don't listen to it and you continue down a path that's going to create problems, that's when you get the \$74 million that you have to set aside. It's not fair to Alberta taxpayers. We have a situation here where AESO – I mean, a capacity market, from everything that I've read, is very complex, and you have to have organizations like AESO and the AUC that will help to regulate a capacity market. You have to have

a series of regulations that will help this capacity market to actually function.

You know, one of the things that's missing in the discussion about this . . .

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the referral amendment on Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. We have time and time again seen how the NDP government's destructive policies and disregard for Albertans have affected the economy, the job market, and just about every aspect of our lives.

Mr. Speaker, from Fort McMurray's perspective, the policies that this government has put in have affected us negatively on personal taxes, municipal taxes. The carbon tax alone, or – sorry – carbon levy, has impacted everything. Chasing away all the international companies from our region truly didn't help us. You know, it's really unfortunate. The policy to decide to do a review of our oil industry: that took you eight months, to decide that oil was good, and in that eight months you gave all the internationals a great amount of time to realize that they didn't see any future here, and they left.

It's unfortunate because a lot of those internationals actually had a lot of good Canadians, local boys and girls, working for them, and they took the cream of that crop, and they moved them to all their jurisdictions everywhere else in the world. My good Member for Calgary-Foothills knows a lot of those guys that left. And then they left themselves, those big companies. So it's unfortunate that your policies haven't been very positive for our province.

One of the insults to injury is that Albertans keep telling the government how this is impacting them, but the government just does not listen. This is one of the reasons that we need to tell the government that it's time to take a step back and send this bill to committee. Albertans need to have their voices heard. Their concerns need to be acknowledged, and considerations need to be made for issues that are insurmountable. I can predict that the government will tell us that they don't need to listen to Albertans, but this is the same type of attitude that led the NDP into the situation where they are now, where they have no other choice but to rush into a capacity market.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I am referring to how they brought in bills 27 and 34 last session, rushed them into effect, and then bungled up the electricity file altogether. They changed the fundamental ways the electricity market operates and introduced instability and unpredictability. They caused volatility in the market, and it was no longer viable for Albertans. No Albertan should be kept out of the loop only to open up their power bill and be shocked by what's inside. Albertans should get their word in before the decision is made, not as feedback to the complaint department.

On this side of the House we've lost trust in the government's ability to fix what they've wronged in Alberta's electricity market. Last time they pushed through with their electricity bills, they did so despite warnings from the opposition, the same as we're doing now, and warnings from the AESO, the Alberta Electric System Operator, the operator mandated by legislation which connects generators with transmitters to run the electricity market and keep adequate electricity flowing. AESO ran many models, in fact, including the high use of intermittent renewables to generate electricity in Alberta, and as the operator that would arguably be best suited to provide guidance on this matter, they proceeded to find with their modelling that the renewable electricity program will

decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker – wow; that was gender fluidity there – they warned that this would be a deterrent to investment, as we then went on to see, with stakeholders begging the government to take action to fix the chaos. As part of providing advice in order to ensure the best outcome for the electricity market, they released a report in October 2016, one month before the NDP came out with Bill 27, and warned them that the reliability of the system would be compromised. Obviously, they said it to deaf ears, just like I am now.

4:10

The report read:

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

The government needed to listen then, but they didn't, and they need to listen now to the experts in the field, the stakeholders in the electricity market, and families across Alberta that have something to say about their power bills.

This is why I urge all my colleagues to support the amendment to send this bill to committee and have a thorough round of consultations done so that we can truly, truly analyze the consequences that this bill will have on everyone because it does affect everyone. It affects business people, it affects employers, it affects mom and dad, and it affects all of our neighbours. It's really disappointing.

Madam Speaker, back when they proceeded to push Bill 27 through despite the constant warnings, they had set a target for 30 per cent renewables. In doing so, they compromised the reliability of the entire electricity system in Alberta. They proceeded recklessly and with little foresight, without a guarantee that peaker plants would be built as backups to produce electricity when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. AESO had warned of compromised reliability for the electricity market, which fell upon deaf ears.

With the volatility and unpredictability of the market stakeholders such as generators, the AESO, the Market Surveillance Administrator, investors, and consumer groups demanded a capacity market. It seems that the prospect of all these stakeholders standing in unison against a poor government decision has forced the NDP to introduce a capacity market. However, they seem to be making the same mistakes as before. They seem to be rushing through it with short timelines and little input.

I have no doubt that you're taking lessons from your comrades in Ontario, but as you can see, what they did to their province wasn't the best. I ask that they slow down and consider taking input from those that will be most closely affected by this legislation. Albertans should not have to open their electricity bills to the shock and dismay of finding out that the government has gone and passed legislation that will affect their day-to-day lives.

I have a friend who used to work for the fire department up in Fort McMurray. He now lives in Airdrie. He sent me a little e-mail on Facebook, and he said: Tany, our bills have gone up \$300 from last year. He's got a family of, I believe, three children, ages, like, five to 13, in between there. That's disappointing when a family like that has to stomach that much in their bills. You know, \$300 is

a lot of money for some people. Maybe not for you guys because you're all raking it in, aren't you?

In the end, we simply do not trust that this government has the expertise on this file to be able to foresee all the effects this will have on the industry without proper consultation. They must be willing to slow down and take input. I thought we had taught you about consulting and speaking to Albertans. You claim to have gotten that consulting thing down pat, but then you throw something out like this. You really lack on that consultation. You lack on consultation that involves anything that relies on the economy and jobs and our industries, and that's a shame.

Due to the lack of former consultation they're now costing taxpayers \$1.36 billion for the early closing of the power plants in order to convert them to natural gas. This is not what consultation would have looked like. The people who will be out of work because they depended on those coal plants for employment in order to pay their mortgages and feed their families did not experience consultation. In fact, they did not hear a word from the government about what would happen to them once those plants shut down. Some of those plants are practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run until 2061 and Genesee 3 until 2055. We believe that taxpayers, who will be cleaning up this mess, have the right to their voice being heard by the government that they have elected. We have also asked that the Auditor General do a full-cost accounting of the NDP's whole electricity fiasco. In one way or another they must be accountable to Albertans.

In a completely different light, when the federal government came out with a reasonable and well-thought-out proposal to phase out 12 coal-fired generating plants, they would have done so by 2029, a much more sensible timeline, which allows proper transition plans to be put in place. They were mindful of families. Instead, this government would phase out the six remaining coal-fired power plants that would operate past 2029. Shameful. I'd like to know what kind of consultation they would have done on this and whether the stakeholders believe this would be an overall benefit.

Well, Madam Speaker, coal conversion to natural gas is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants.

[The Speaker in the chair]

But, Madam – Mr. Speaker. Oh, you pulled another fast one on me there, sir. You are the most fluid of fluid.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP forced this on Albertans way too fast. We have seen this bureaucratic style of top-down decision-making a lot over the last three years. They rush the implementation of a coal phase-out against warnings by all, and now they're rushing to fix their mistakes by implementing a capacity market. I urge this government to stop the rush and send this bill to committee, where its effects can be thoroughly examined, so that in a year's time we're not all playing cleanup once again.

The \$1,000 megawatt hour cap on electricity prices would have to rise to \$5,000 a megawatt hour in order for investment to be attracted to keep the system reliable. Can you stand your power bills going up five times the price? Or how about the monthly volatility of your bills? No one wanted the same electricity disaster as in Ontario, but this government could not politically afford Albertans' power bills being five times higher. This government is already costing taxpayers \$1.36 billion by shutting down these coal plants early and converting them to natural gas. The government was set on shortening that time frame. I'd like to know why this is so rushed, why it needs to be passed so quickly that it should not be thoroughly consulted on first. Instead of implementing the capacity market over three to six years, they're doing it over two years.

Mr. Speaker, this government has put in place a 6.8 cent per kilowatt hour cap, and they will subsidize your power bill should power prices rise over that 6.8 cents. However, they're going to be using tax dollars to pay down the rest of the power bills. Where do those tax dollars come from? I'll have you guys know, if you haven't clued into this already, that the ratepayer and the taxpayer are the same person. You're hitting all Albertans, and it's very unfortunate.

You know, I just find it amazing that you do attack our coal generation plants here. Quite honestly, when we look at a country like China, where the homes are heated with coal, a whole bunch of individual furnaces in every home all use coal. I can't help but wonder if when the Minister of Economic Development and Trade went to China, he thought of, like, perhaps selling them our gas and selling them our furnace technology to heat all those individual homes, because China is the biggest polluter in the world. Yes, you have billions of people who are using coal to heat their homes, and not all of those are high-efficiency burners. Those are ovens that they're heating their houses with. They are trying to put some gas in, but that's been unreliable, and for the last few winters they've had to fall back on coal, even the ones that did convert over to gas.

4:20

Anyways, back to the subject, sir. This is the government's roundabout way of taking money out of the pockets of Albertans without them knowing. Wind and solar energy are important, but they are not yet at the level where they can be interchangeable with coal or natural gas in terms of reliability and capacity. Alberta needs a steady, basic stream of electricity from baseload combined-cycle natural gas and simple-cycle natural gas obtained through peaker plants in order to begin to replace coal and to provide a backup necessary for renewable forms of energy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Panda: Yes, sir. I wanted my colleague from Fort McMurray to finish his thoughts about the coal-fired electric generation and other subjects he was talking about if he can.

The Speaker: I'm having a little difficulty hearing you, hon. member.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you very much, my good engineer friend. He'd love to just hear me finish off my thoughts, and if I could, that would be wonderful.

Let me reiterate: Alberta needs a steady basic stream of electricity from baseload combined-cycle natural gas and simple-cycle natural gas in order to begin to replace coal and to provide the backup necessary for renewable forms of energy. The AESO has a requirement for a 15 per cent reserve margin, and wind and solar energy on their own are not reliable enough to meet that as they are too fickle in nature. The wind doesn't always blow, and the sun doesn't always shine.

It is clear that the government has not done enough consultation on this matter, and the electricity file is too important to all Albertans to just wait and see what happens. We need to send Bill 13 to committee and allow everyone impacted by this bill to have their voices heard. That's why I'm urging all of my colleagues from across the way to vote in favour of this referral amendment.

I thank you for your time, sir.

The Speaker: Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep my comments brief. I think my colleagues have generally made most of the points that need to be made here, but I think they're well taken.

The members for Calgary-Foothills and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo have made the point about why this bill is certainly flawed, why it's important to send it to committee for consultation. In general I believe that all bills should be sent to a committee for consultation. I rarely consider Ottawa to be a shining beacon of good parliamentary process, but when they can shame us, I think that there is something to be said for it.

I won't belabour the point, but I think that it's important for us to recognize that bills like this have an important impact on our economic future, on the ability of families and small businesses to live normal lives and to run normal businesses without undue burdens and the long-term impacts that this bill could have, as we see in Ontario. I would encourage all members of the House to support this amendment to refer the bill to a committee so we can hear from Albertans, small businesses, and those who are impacted by it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, the Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would rise to adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 9 Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Chair. I spoke on this bill during second reading. I spoke to the two miscarriages I endured. I spoke to the fact that those miscarriages were not my choice, and I will refer back to this fact a little later.

When this debate began, the only voice from the Official Opposition spoke of freedom of speech and then left the Chamber crying: heckling. I have to speak on this and the disrespect I see and feel when the Official Opposition fails to stay in this Chamber to debate this issue. I expect many Albertan women feel as I do in that you don't have the whatever to actually speak to your values. I am telling you that I do. I am telling you that any person's freedom of speech does not trump my right or any other woman's right to security of person.

I will also tell you that within my head I had to be brought to the distance of 150 metres kicking and screaming as my gut was telling me no. The fact is that there was a time when I could have sprinted 150 metres in 16 seconds. In 16 seconds a lot of damage could be done to a person or a facility, certainly much quicker than the police could arrive and provide security. Personally, I would have preferred the distance that one could shoot a gun to ensure the safety of a woman, but I do understand that 150 metres is a reasonable distance.

Again, having said this, many people go to clinics every day, and no one hassles them as they go to get a medical, a cancer treatment, or a prescription for Viagra. My question is: why is it that someone becomes a uterus control person when it comes to my or somebody else's body, in fact so much so that we have to create a safety bubble around a facility which addresses the needs of my uterus? It is none of your business.

Now I will reflect back to my statement about how those miscarriages were not my choice. They were the choice of a uterus control person who wanted to control every facet of my life. I don't want that to happen to anybody else. I don't want that to happen to any woman who's seeking medical treatment for whatever reason. It's none of your business, just as it is none of my business if you're going to get a prescription for Viagra.

I will stand here, and I support the member's amendment for 150 metres. Again, I'd like it to be further, but I do think that I'm a fairly reasonable person, so I stand in support of that amendment.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-East for her comments, especially with regard to Viagra prescriptions. At least she could get up in the House. Do I need to say anything else?

I certainly appreciate a lot of her comments. You know, a lot of women go to these clinics not just to seek abortions, but they go for miscarriages. These are not just purely about abortion even. They are in many cases just going to deal with other issues around pregnancy. I certainly respect their right to privacy and to not be harassed and to be able to go about their business peacefully.

4:30

Now, I said in the debate last night that every debate is balancing competing interests and competing rights, and no one right absolutely trumps all other rights without any regard for balance. You know, different members here put different weight on different rights, but I think we're well served to remember that every right is weighed in contrast to other rights that it is conflicting with.

I have an amendment to put forward here that does not deal, necessarily, with the substance or even the merits of the bill but, I think, just seeks to improve its wording. Actually, members who support or don't support the bill itself should generally be supportive of this amendment. I believe that it just seeks to clarify some wording and make it easier for the law to be carried out.

I will table this now to the pages.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you. I will read the amendment into the record. I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 2 is amended by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to the following persons, while those persons are carrying out their duties:

- (a) police officers;
- (b) persons empowered to enforce a bylaw under the Municipal Government Act, a provision of the Municipal Government Act or a provision of other enactment that a municipality is authorized to enforce.

In part B section 3(2) is amended by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

- (b) the persons referred to in section 2(2), while those persons are carrying out their duties.

This amendment does not change the substance of the bill. It does not change the merits or demerits of the bill. It preserves it intact. But it is a rather technical amendment that I think is just better legislation regardless of what one thinks of the merits of this bill.

In essence, the bill does have roles for police officers in the enforcement of the act that the government is proposing here, Bill 9. What this amendment seeks to do is to ensure that the same rules apply to municipal bylaw officers. As I said, if anything, it actually strengthens the bill, probably, from the government's perspective, but even for those of us who do not believe it strikes the appropriate balance, I think it's just good legislative writing.

I've consulted on this with municipalities in my constituency and with legal experts. This takes away no powers from the police or powers that the government is proposing to give the police to enforce the act, which ensures that municipal bylaw officers are also able to carry out their duties fully without being worried about stepping over the law here. I think we would generally recognize that a legal matter of this nature can also be dealt with, at least in many circumstances, by municipal bylaw officers. If it's a circumstance that's more serious, obviously we would have police involvement. But I think that in many of the cases, we would generally agree that municipal bylaw officers are capable of carrying it out, and if that's appropriate, they should be covered by this legislation as well.

I would welcome feedback and comment from members on all sides of the House, and I hope that they support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I want to sincerely thank the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for engaging in the parliamentary process that we are so proud to have the opportunity to do here. I know that that isn't the case, necessarily, for everyone in this House, so I appreciate that he's taken the time to bring forward something that he thinks can improve this legislation and that he's taken the time to consider it and vote on it as well. Again, I want to say that I respect that.

Always when I look at an amendment to a piece of government legislation, my first question is: does this honour the intent of the original bill, and is this going to help us make the bill or hurt us in making the bill? I can say that I think this honours the intent of the original bill. I think that it's exciting to see an amendment that – this isn't the way it's worded in other jurisdictions that we've used as our template, but I think this certainly doesn't impede or hurt our ability to do enforcement. With that as my sort of guide, I think this honours the intent of the bill and that this won't be damaging in any way. I think this says to me and, hopefully, to all members of this caucus that this is something that we can certainly move on in good conscience moving forward.

While I don't always agree with the member – actually, I rarely agree with the member – I have to say that I do agree that it's important for us to come here every day and represent our constituents and the people we're here to serve. I have the honour of being able to do that with sort of guiding values around – you know, I mentioned the other day that I walk into this place and I see “Now That We Are Persons.” And now that we are persons, we can create laws to help other women and to help make a more just society.

I think that this is a reasonable amendment, and I am happy to speak in support of it and encourage not just my colleagues but colleagues from other caucuses as well, I'd say, to consider voting for this amendment. I think it's fair and reasonable. I think it gives additional protections, confidence to the police without compromising the safety of the women accessing these zones. I certainly think that

this could be a very useful amendment, and I would encourage not just colleagues in my caucus but in all caucuses to consider supporting this amendment from the member.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:38 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Hoffman	Nielsen
Connolly	Horne	Payne
Coolahan	Jansen	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Piquette
Dach	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Drever	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Eggen	Loyola	Sabir
Feehan	Luff	Sucha
Fildebrandt	Malkinson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard

Totals: For – 39 Against – 0

[Motion on amendment A2 carried unanimously]

The Chair: We are back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, that was weird. I'm not really used to this. It feels good to finally win one, although it will damage my record of being the member with most votes against the NDP, for which I'm sad. But I'm not sure if it counts when the NDP get to vote with me. It felt great. But no, I want to thank the members who were present for the vote for supporting the previous amendment. I think it improves the bill. As I said, it was a rather technical change still preserving the intent of the bill.

You know, in many ways there is a lot in the bill I could support. I do believe that the balance is wrong. I don't believe it's appropriate for a bill to target one specific group generally not liked by the government of the day, but there are still laudable intentions, I think, behind the bill.

Some of the amendments I'll be bringing forward, I have to say, probably don't have the greatest chance of getting accepted by the government but I think are necessary to make regardless. Some of them, like the previous one, I am hopeful will receive the support of government and other opposition members as we seek to, even if we don't always agree with the bill, at least make the bill better from a technical and legislative standpoint. I've got binders full of amendments, Madam Chair, and I'll be bringing some forward here.

My next amendment – well, here. I'll just distribute it to the House and pages before I speak to it.

The Chair: Amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I was saying before I distributed the amendment before the members right now, this amendment is put forward with the intention of simply just better legislative writing. I know that the public servants who put in a lot of work in writing bills are professional and second to none. I was very surprised to learn that Parliamentary Counsel is not paid by the hour. If they were paid by the hour, they'd be racking up the overtime with what my office has put them through.

You know, I've learned a lot about the parliamentary process as an independent, and while I don't think it's practical, I think that all members should try six months as an independent. You really learn the way this place works. I don't think many are going to take me up on the offer, but you learn quite a bit about the actual functionality of this place and parliamentary process when you've got to do the heavy lifting. Frankly, the heavy lifting has been done by my staff, which has been incredible, and by Parliamentary Counsel, who have probably really gotten sick of me by this point, but they've been excellent here in helping to write legislation that just improves upon existing bills, again, if we agree with the intent or balance of the bill or not.

Some of the other amendments I'll put forward are dealing more with the substance of the bill, its appropriate balance as a piece of legislation, but this amendment before the members right now is in the same spirit as the last amendment that I put forward and was accepted. I'll read it for members now. I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 1 is amended by adding the following after clause (e):

(e.1) "journalistic purpose" means communications by a publisher, writer or reporter for a newspaper, news magazine, television broadcaster or radio broadcaster, as the case may be, that is of general and regular circulation or broadcast for the purpose of disseminating information to the public;

In part B the following is added after section 1:

Application

1.1 Sections 2(1)(c), 3 and 5(1)(a) and (b) do not apply to a person communicating for a journalistic purpose.

The purpose of this is just to clarify that journalists will still be able to do their business in covering the issues of the day without being considered a protester. This is very carefully worded. You know, we have the phenomenon of activist journalism, and the intent of this is not to include activist journalism.

Now, it's always very dangerous if a government tries to define journalism. I don't think that's a proper role of government. It's a very dangerous road to go down, a slippery slope. This is not intended for every blogger with a keyboard or camera. This is defined here . . .

5:00

Ms Hoffman: Aren't you defining it right now?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, no.

The government should not be picking and choosing who is a journalist but that we have a broad definition that's not so broad that it's everyone with a keyboard. It is defined here as "a newspaper, news magazine, television broadcaster or radio broadcaster, as the case may be." I think it would be fair to say that, for the most part, that does not cover citizen journalism or activist journalism. Those are very legitimate forms of journalism. They tend to be, obviously, much more politically slanted, and there's a real place for that, and they should never be silenced. But the goal of this should be that the objective journalistic organizations which cover the news shouldn't be considered protesters.

If an activist organization is covering a protest here and filming that, I believe that the wording of this amendment would not

exclude them from the bill, that they would not be able to do so. I think one of the most horrible things that some people can do in these protests is to film individual people and try to shame individual people. Regardless of how you feel about abortion, attacking an individual woman once she's already made that decision is not going to advance the cause and, frankly, takes away from what they're trying to achieve and is very uncompassionate. So I think that stopping photographers and cameras from filming women entering these facilities is a laudable goal.

I know what it's like, actually, to have journalists pry into your home. I've had the CBC parked outside of my house with cameras pointed into my windows, where my wife and baby child were. The CBC parked outside of my home, prying into my windows, and that's not appropriate. No one wants to deal with that. You know, it often comes with this business, and we have to deal with it, but I don't think that individual women accessing an abortion clinic should be subject to that. They're not public figures. That is harassment of one of the most disgusting types, so I want them to be protected from that.

I think that most nonactivist or citizen news organizations are certainly not engaging in that. They would not, with the wording of this amendment, be able to film individual people entering or exiting an abortion clinic or women's health centre of some kind that's covered in the legislation, but they would be able to otherwise go about their business. Hypothetically, if the building had been broken into or graffitied or, say, there had been a strike or, say, they added to the size of the building or upgraded the building and there was legitimate news to be covered about the facility, then it would not be unreasonable or intrusive for journalists to do their job and to take some film of the facility.

I've never seen a news organization ever take film or photos of a woman entering or exiting an abortion clinic. It's always been in the nature of B-roll, where there are a couple of cars rolling by and maybe a bird in the background. It's very objective. I've never seen a news organization film individual women entering or exiting one of these clinics, so I don't think it's been abused by the media to date, and I don't think it would be abused in the future. But I think it's an important aspect to take note of when we're writing legislation like this.

I do not believe it takes away from the intent of the bill and what the government is trying to achieve here. I think it's trying to clarify that, you know, if the CBC, CTV, Global were to set up a camera across the street and take some B-roll film in the background, not filming individual people entering or exiting the clinic, I don't think that constitutes a protest. I don't think that constitutes harassment, blocking an entrance. I don't think it fits the definition of any of that. So I would submit this to members on all sides of this House for due consideration. This is not changing the intent of the bill in one direction or another. Again, it's an amendment of a largely technical nature that seeks to, I think, better clarify the wording of the bill to make sure it doesn't do things that it's not intended to do. I do not believe that the intention of this bill would be to stop Global News from filming B-roll outside of a clinic, not featuring any individuals entering or exiting.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I appreciate the amendment you're bringing forward, and certainly my colleagues do as well. I think that one of the big questions for the ages here is: what is journalistic purpose? Certainly, you mentioned that the goal of this is not to allow special-interest groups who call themselves media to have the kind of access that protesters have. But the fact

is that you are not making that call, and these folks are out there. The idea is that antiabortion media – if you google “antiabortion media,” what will come up is a list as long as your arm of folks in this country who have media outlets that they call media but whose sole purpose is to disseminate misinformation about women’s reproductive rights.

You know, first of all, that’s a concern because you’re not going to be able to make a comprehensive list of who is mainstream media and who isn’t mainstream media. Now, I will certainly say that anyone who wants to go out there and call themselves mainstream media then has the opportunity to argue that they’re journalists and they’re exempt from the rules that other people have to follow. That’s concerning because the definition of media is so broad.

I can tell you that I was a journalist for 24 years, and at no time in that 24 years – and I covered many stories, many stories at clinics – did I ever hang around outside a clinic looking for a story. Mainstream media will pick up the phone, whether it’s our assignment editor or we’re doing the work ourselves, and we will make a phone call to the clinic and say, “We’re coming down to do a story or an interview,” and we will book an appointment. It’s called consent. That’s a thing that we do in the media. In all the stories that I covered at clinics, we booked appointments, we went down, we did interviews, we got our B-roll, and if we were ever in a situation where the only thing we were looking at was B-roll, we went to the clinic and shot the B-roll.

A buffer or a bubble zone would have absolutely no effect on a mainstream media outlet’s ability to carry out their job. So this is, first of all, unnecessary in the sense that it doesn’t intrude on mainstream media in any way at all. Secondly, what it does is that it creates a window of opportunity for antiabortion groups to come and to do their harassment within the bubble zone.

Now, I will say that, certainly, when women are accessing a clinic, they don’t show up at a clinic with a chart to show everybody outside what it is they’re going in for, nor should they. What happens is that women go into these clinics for many-layered reasons, and when they go into these clinics, these groups then have an opportunity to not only take pictures of them, whether it’s video and photographs, but to use them in any way, shape, or form they want. That is chilling. What you see when that happens is that these women are going in during an intensely personal, painful, emotional, vulnerable point in their lives to have whatever discussion or procedure they plan to have within that clinic, and this would allow these special-interest groups to stand within the bubble zone and to get images of them to do with whatever they want.

5:10

Now, we have lots of media groups, as we’re very familiar with in this country, who call themselves mainstream media, who clearly are not. They have agendas. And to actually have to make a list of who is mainstream media and who isn’t would be an impossible task to do.

You know, I understand what you are explaining, that the whole goal is to make sure that mainstream media can cover stories. I appreciate the goal of the amendment. I will say that I consider it a bit naive. I know, Member, you’re probably not going to hear people describe you that way a lot, but I will. I will say that, certainly, if the goal is to make sure that the media can still tell their story, there is absolutely nothing to stop them from talking about these issues the way they have always done, by making a phone call, by booking an interview, or by simply going to a clinic the way they have ever since I can remember – and I’ve been around a long time – and shooting the footage respectfully and using it respectfully like they have done so far.

While I appreciate the effort, I will say that I find the implications of this amendment frightening, and I know that’s not what you intended. At the end of the day, it endangers the people who use the facility, the staff, and anyone in that proximity. So I will urge my colleagues to vote down this amendment because I believe that in no way at this time are the efforts of the mainstream media or their attempts to cover stories hampered in any way, shape, or form, and I think this amendment, if accepted, would open the door to a frightening possibility of some very negative interactions happening at these clinics.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-North West for her comments. You know, I think she is correct that if essentially anyone with a camera and keyboard can call themselves a journalist or media now – and sometimes that’s positive; sometimes, perhaps, it’s not. There is left-wing citizen or activist journalism, and there is right-wing citizen and activist journalism, and some people who just want to blog about the issues of the day without a particular agenda but who would probably not be considered mainstream media.

I take her comments well here, but I have to disagree with how she believes this would be applied. You know, she spoke to her time in the media – I believe it was CTV for some time – and that, in her experience, never once did they send a CTV camera to one of these clinics without first consulting them and letting them know that they were coming. If I understood her correctly, they certainly never captured the images of any individual people entering or exiting these facilities. It was carried out respectfully and reasonably. It was not used to target or harass or shame an individual person. That’s the way it’s already been taking place for media outlets. This bill, however, would at least legally stop the media from respectfully and even consensually taking what amounts to B-roll footage outside of a clinic.

Journalists who are covering this story, at least for television, that I’ve seen have been respectful. The footage I’ve seen on television is footage from the Legislature, and B-roll footage was used. I haven’t seen anyone in the media, activist or mainstream, that has used images of individual women entering or exiting these facilities. So it’s actually been used respectfully.

Now, individual people may at some point have tried to use their cameras to capture images of and shame individual women, and it’s beneath contempt for anyone to do that. But in the experience that she’s pointed to, they never showed up unannounced at one of these clinics with a camera and ambushed anybody. It was respectful; it was consensual. They called in advance. That’s the way it should be, and that’s the way I envision it going forward. But the way this legislation presently reads, that wouldn’t be the case.

Now, in practicality it is likely that, you know, if a media outlet contacted a clinic in advance and said that they wanted to come and capture some B-roll footage, I think it’s probably fair to say that the clinic would not call the police or bylaw officers to come and do something about it and enforce this bill, but the bill still could be enforced if it is passed in the present wording. It is unlikely that the clinic would call the police or bylaw officers on a media crew that at least have their consent to be there, but legally speaking, they would not be allowed to be there even to film B-roll footage that doesn’t single out or identify any individual woman.

So the purpose of this amendment is to clarify this so that it’s very clear. I think if someone who called themselves a journalist or called themselves media were to show up there and take images of

an individual woman entering or exiting the facility, that would still constitute a violation of the bill because it would be used for the purposes of harassment or intimidation or shaming, and the bill is still clear that that would be illegal. That's one part of the bill that I really agree with, that you should not be allowed to film people entering or exiting these facilities. It's contemptable. That is probably the part of the bill that I would agree with the most. But it's important that if a news organization is simply going to take some B-roll footage of the facility without the intention or result of harassing, identifying, or shaming anyone, then it's perfectly reasonable for them to do so.

As the Member for Calgary-North West has said, when she was a journalist, she would always call in advance or her colleagues would call in advance, and they always did so in a respectful way. Perhaps members of the gallery can send me a direct message if I'm wrong, but I can't remember any time that CTV or Global or CBC has ever used individual images on their programs of a particular woman or doctor entering or exiting one of these clinics. It simply, as far as I'm aware, has not happened in Canada as long as I can remember.

So I would ask that members give this amendment due consideration. It is an amendment of a rather technical nature, not changing the intent of the bill, not even changing the weight in which it leans one direction or another, but simply clarifying some of the language around this so that, you know, journalists can still do their business in the respectful way that they generally do.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

[The voice vote indicated that motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:19 p.m.]

[One minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Hoffman	Miranda
Connolly	Horne	Nielsen
Coolahan	Jansen	Payne
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Phillips
Dach	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Drever	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Eggen	Loyola	Sabir
Feehan	Luff	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Turner
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Gray	McPherson	Woollard
Totals:	For – 1	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would move that debate be adjourned and that when the committee next rises, it reports progress on Bill 9.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 12

Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. In respect to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, the bill is a result of a set of extraordinary circumstances, and the situation it seeks to rectify will hopefully be very short lived. It's a shame that it had to come to this, but here we are.

As I understand it, the industry is generally supportive of the bill because they understand the importance of taking actions to ensure that Alberta producers get the maximum return on Alberta's natural resources. But the power to arbitrarily dictate to whom and how products are shipped should not exist in perpetuity. As such, I propose an amendment to Bill 12. If the pages would like to come and collect it. Let me know when you'd like me to go ahead.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McPherson: I move that Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, be amended by adding the following after section 13:

Repeal and continuation

14(1) Subject to subsection (2), this Act is repealed 2 years after the date on which it comes into force.

(2) Where in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly it is in the public interest of Alberta to extend the date of the repeal of this Act, the Legislative Assembly may adopt a resolution to extend the date.

This amendment adds what is commonly referred to as a sunset clause. It means that all provisions of the bill will expire on December 31, 2022, unless the Legislature extends the bill or if there are other circumstances. This will provide industry with assurances that the power to arbitrarily dictate to whom and where and when they sell their product will only continue so long as the Legislature approves it to continue. Given the power that the government is granted with this bill, it's reasonable to place a limitation on that power. At the very least, the Legislature will need to reaffirm that power, or if it has served its purpose, the power will revert to how things are today.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the hon. member for this amendment. Looking at it, it looks reasonable to me. Two years is a reasonable time, and then there is the ability to revisit it should, at that time, circumstances dictate that we keep it. If not, you know, as this pipeline is done, we may look at others. This legislation isn't just directed in one direction; it's all directions.

We think this is reasonable, and I would encourage all members of the House to support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the government for their support. I was actually on a flight from Calgary to Edmonton this morning, and I sat beside a gentleman from London, Ontario. His name was Richard. He didn't know what I did for a living, and he said: "What about that pipeline? When are

you going to get it built?" We had a really good conversation. It's broadly recognized across the country how integral this pipeline is to the economic security of our entire country. There are certainly times in the Assembly when we need to put aside partisanship, and this is definitely one of those times. In an effort to ensure that a pipeline that is in the best interests of the entire country goes ahead, this bill is important, but it also is very powerful.

I'm really very grateful for the support. You know, working together, we can make great things happen for a great province. Again I just want to extend my thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for bringing the amendment forward and the hon. Minister of Energy for accepting it. She got the jump on me. I was going to bring forward a very similar amendment to this and give the government four years before it expired. Perhaps I was trusting in government a bit too much. But I think the point is very well, that these are extraordinary circumstances and these are extraordinary powers. We should always be very cautious about giving government powers that are largely arbitrary in nature. I think that under the circumstances that we're in, they are appropriate powers but that powers like this have a sunset clause. So while I was going to propose four years, I think two years is even better because if we still need them in two years, we're in a whole other host of trouble.

I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for bringing this forward and encourage all members to support it.

5:30

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much. Now, this is fun. I have to say that I appreciate that the member – because last night I think he wanted to amend a section that we already had an amendment to amend so that he could amend the same section if that amendment passed.

I think his idea of looking at other time frames is something that merits discussion. I think this is worded as two years. Maybe we land on 25 months, or maybe we land on 23 months, or maybe we land on something else. That being said, I actually think that this could be an opportunity for us to consider other timelines.

That being said, I'm going to actually encourage my colleagues to consider voting against this so that we can consider other timelines. Thank you very much to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for his contributions to the debate and helping us to consider those other opportunities.

Thank you.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, we are in the twilight zone. I don't want my amendment to pass. The amendment from Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill is better. As much as I would like the credit perhaps for getting the bill amended, I think that two years is much more appropriate than four. I really don't know what the heck to say.

I prefer four years over having no sunset clause, but I don't know what to do anymore. If the government members vote it down, I will bring forward my amendment of four years, but I encourage all members not to make it necessary for me to bring forward my amendment. The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill's two-year timeline, I think, is eminently superior.

Two years from now will be after the next election, in all likelihood. There may or may not be a new government. I'm sure that members opposite don't think that's possible. You know, I

think that in two years, if the government still needs to have these powers, then we're into probably a much graver step in this crisis. If those powers are still needed, I think all members here would be happy, when everyone here is re-elected exactly as they are, to renew the mandate of this bill. I certainly would be if those powers were still required, but it is a bill with very significant and, admittedly, arbitrary powers, and we should always be careful when granting government arbitrary powers. In this case I do because I think we all share the intentions of what the government wants to achieve here.

Two years I think is certainly an ample amount of time for this bill to go before it requires renewal by this House, so I would strongly encourage members to support the amendment from the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. It's eminently better than my amendment of four years. I beg members: don't vote for my amendment; vote for the amendment from the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really struck by the saying: politics makes strange bedfellows. It's not often that I find myself in agreement with the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, but in the last couple of weeks I think I've said, "Oh, good for him" and "I could just hug him," which is unusual.

I just want to reiterate why I think the timeline is important. This is a bill that grants a lot of power, and it is important given the circumstances that we're in right now. With the pipeline being in jeopardy, it is really important for the government to have the tools that it needs in order to be able to put the province in the best possible negotiating position to ensure that the pipeline is completed.

Those powers in perpetuity are actually very concerning. It is possible for a government in the future to use these powers in a way that wouldn't necessarily be in the best interests of the province or the producers in the province, and that would certainly not be in the best interests of the country either. That's why we came up with two years. Two years is, I believe, an ample amount of time to resolve the current position that we find ourselves in. It allows the government to do the things it needs to do, and it gives the government the tools that are required in order to be able to resolve the situation but doesn't give them those powers forever. In the eloquent words of my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks I think two years is a reasonable amount of time. It's sufficient to get the job done, and it also ensures that the powers of the government are limited in the future.

For those reasons, I would like to encourage my colleagues to please vote in favour of the amendment.

The Chair: Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll speak to the amendment. You know, it's really difficult to enact this bill itself because we don't want to be doing this at all. We don't want to enforce this bill because it does give extraordinary powers and it could actually be hurtful to not only British Columbia but to Alberta. With that said, because we have to think about the consequences of this bill and the good things that could come of this bill, we have to think about what this amendment does as well. We shouldn't take this amendment lightly as well. As the Deputy Premier said, maybe we need to take some more time to think about if we need to have timelines or what specific timelines we should have on a sunset clause, if you will.

You know, it does give the minister extraordinary powers, but we have to be clear as well that companies would not be automatically required to apply for an export licence either. They would only be required to do so if the minister deems it appropriate. As per the bill, section 2(3) of the legislation, the first step in the process is actually for the minister to determine whether requiring an export licence “is in the public interest.” I think that’s a key phrase right there: in the public interest. I think we can say that about the amendment on the table right now: is it in the public interest?

The criteria that would be established for determining the licence include several things, too: “whether adequate pipeline capacity exists to maximize the return on crude oil and diluted bitumen produced in Alberta,” the method by which these resources may be exported from Alberta, and many other criteria.

We have to understand, too, Madam Chair, as I said, that we don’t take this legislation lightly, but we also didn’t start this fight either, did we? We didn’t start this fight at all. You know, this government has been playing by the rules from day one. We had this pipeline in our sights from day one. With the climate leadership plan a big part of that was getting approval for the pipeline in the first place. That was the big first step. As I’ve said before, you know, we wouldn’t be here right now if it weren’t for the climate leadership plan. Let’s face it; we wouldn’t be talking about shovels in the ground.

I guess that’s part of the reason why we don’t want to necessarily support this amendment at this time either, because we understand the criticality of the pipeline, and we understand how important this piece of legislation actually is to Alberta. You know, there’s deep frustration that we have felt as a government in playing by the rules and getting approval for the pipeline, and then we see the blatant hypocrisy happening in British Columbia right now with their own pipeline going up the coast with jet fuel. The other hypocritical piece of that is that the pension plan is invested in pipelines, Kinder Morgan. Isn’t that shocking?

5:40

You know, the B.C. government can’t continue to impact Alberta’s economy, and we just don’t know how long the government is going to be required to enforce the statutes in Bill 12. Is it going to take a day? Are they going to succumb? Probably not. Is it going to take a month? I mean, we’ll keep fighting. We’ll keep fighting every court challenge. Do we need to bring more legislation in? Maybe we do, but this is a really good first step. I don’t think at this point we can actually say: “Two years is sufficient. We’ll have this taken care of. The minister doesn’t need to make these crucial decisions on pipeline capacity and whether to withhold pipelines and whether to grant licences to producers of all sorts of energy, natural gas, bitumen.”

So at this time I don’t think we can support it, but I will be happy to sit down at some point and discuss more about what should be the timeline on this. I mean, should it be indefinite? Perhaps that is what we need to do. Are we not going to face this type of resistance to pipelines in the future? I think we just might. I mean, it seems to be what’s happening in British Columbia right now, so maybe we actually need to have an indefinite timeline on this so that at any time the B.C. government will understand that the Minister of Energy will have the ability to turn off the taps.

We saw how much the price of gas is in the Lower Mainland right now. How’s two bucks, \$2.50, \$3? Can I go for \$4? You know, in a lot of places gas is actually cheaper than a litre of milk. A litre of gas is cheaper than a litre of milk, I’m telling you. Soon it won’t be. It’s going to be very expensive in British Columbia. We don’t want

to get there, but we want to have the ability to turn off the taps and make a statement on this.

With that said, Madam Chair, I will not be supporting this. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just feel compelled to maybe review a few things while we’re thinking about this whole bill and just remind us, you know, why we’re here and the nature of what’s in the best interest and that. Bill 12, Preserving Canada’s Economy Prosperity Act. We’re now at Committee of the Whole, and I appreciate the input everybody has had.

Through this bill, Madam Chair, our government is demonstrating that we are standing up for Alberta and a healthy Canadian energy sector, including the working people and men it employs. I’m pleased that we’ve had positive speeches on both sides of the House on this. I cannot think of a more timely and important piece of legislation than what we are about to debate in this Committee of the Whole and when we look at amendments and that. I hope our government will have the support of every single member in this House for this bill. I think most members in this Chamber know why this legislation is needed. Simply put, our existing pipeline capacity is full, there’s no more room in the system, and because of this we face some hard choices.

Alberta all along has played by the rules. We secured federal approval for this pipeline thanks in large part to our climate leadership plan. We have defended the expansion every time it has been taken to court, Madam Chair; 14 out of 14 times we have been successful, each and every time, over the opponents of this pipeline. But the B.C. government has continued to put up roadblocks despite this court action, and the Canadian government has remained slow to defend the decision it made in this area, that falls under, clearly, their jurisdiction.

So it has fallen, Madam Chair, to Alberta to act. Now we must defend all Canadian workers, the Canadian economy, and Alberta’s and Canada’s progress on climate action. Every day the Canadian economy is losing \$40 million – \$40 million a day – because of the lack of this pipeline capacity and the lack of access to markets. That’s money that we all agree could be supporting jobs, families, social programs, and, incidentally, funding our transition to a low-carbon future.

Alberta’s natural resources are owned by Alberta, but the benefits that those resources provide are shared across the country. There’s no road, there’s no school, there’s no bridge, there’s no hospital, courthouse, seniors’ centre that doesn’t owe something to Alberta’s energy economy. A low-carbon future for Alberta will make it possible for Canada to meet its climate targets. Without progress in Alberta, Madam Chair, Canada will miss those targets by a country mile, and that’s just a fact. So people from every corner of this country who care about the environment should be rooting for this pipeline, not opposing it.

I’m pleased to see that support for this pipeline is rising. Thanks to the work of our Premier, that she has done across the country, people are climbing onboard and realizing what a good project it is. Thanks to the good work of many people in this government, more than two-thirds of Canadians now support the Trans Mountain expansion, but clearly more needs to be done. Our government needs more tools in the tool box to bring this pipeline to fruition, which brings us to the bill before us.

Preserving Canada’s Economic Prosperity Act would give the government the authority to if necessary – and I emphasize if necessary – require any company exporting oil and gas products

from Alberta to acquire a licence. It's important to understand a few distinctions about this legislation.

To be clear, companies will not be automatically required to apply for an export licence. They will only be required to do so if it's deemed necessary. As per section 2(3) of the legislation the first step in the process is for me as minister to determine whether requiring export licences is in the public interest. I want to review the criteria for establishing that:

- (a) whether adequate pipeline capacity exists to maximize the return on crude oil and diluted bitumen produced in Alberta,
- (b) whether adequate supplies and reserves of natural gas, crude oil and refined fuels will be available for Alberta's present and future needs.

Should I determine that such a decision would be in the best interest of Albertans, I may then establish some terms and conditions of such a licence. These are outlined in section 4(2) of the legislation. Those conditions may include but are not limited to:

- (a) the point at which the licensee may export from Alberta any quantity of natural gas, crude oil or refined fuels;
- (b) the method by which [these resources] may be exported . . .
- (c) the maximum quantities . . . that may be exported from Alberta during the interval or intervals set out in the licence;
- (d) the maximum daily quantities of natural gas, crude oil or refined fuels that may be exported from Alberta;
- (e) the conditions under which the export . . . of [these resources] may be diverted, reduced or interrupted;
- (f) the period for which the licence is [in effect].

In addition, I may impose different terms or conditions upon a licensee for different types of refined fuels.

I have met with numerous industry leaders in the past several weeks, and I have promised there will be no surprises. While we all know that this legislation will have economic impacts on Alberta companies, the industry leaders that I and others in our government have spoken with absolutely understand this is for the long-term benefit of a healthy and stable energy industry.

We understand the gravity of using this legislation. It is not a step we would take lightly, but we know it is a step we must be prepared to take if necessary. As the Premier has said, we need to ensure Albertans get the best value from the resources that we own, so we will strategically deploy this authority to ensure that we get the best value. This will depend on circumstances at any given time. The bill is crafted so that we can use it quickly when needed.

I want to move on for one moment to discuss not just the need for our pipeline from our end but the demand that exists on the other side of the ocean. It has been suggested by critics that this vital pipeline is not needed because no one overseas wants Alberta oil. They try to suggest that because very little has been exported to Asia from the existing pipeline, this proves that there's no demand.

Well, Madam Chair, we need to set the record straight. In the fall of 2017 I went on a trade mission to Japan, China, and Korea, where it was made very clear to me that importers in these countries are eager to buy our oil, and they cannot understand why Canada cannot deliver it. Companies such as Cosmo Oil of Japan said very clearly that they're interested in diversifying their imports with oil from Canada. In fact, the company has said that it will take 11 to 12 days for Aframax tankers to reach Japan from Vancouver, compared to nearly 30 days for tankers to come from the U.S. Gulf coast via the Panama Canal. That's nearly 20 days' difference in travel time. Of course, that doesn't just mean time; it absolutely means money. Simply put, Asian markets will save money on buying Alberta oil.

5:50

Of course, we know that Asian markets want our oil, no matter what some pipeline opponents might say. But more than that, Alberta can offer oil produced under some of the highest standards

in the world. Alberta has strict environmental regulations and a climate leadership plan that includes a cap on oil sands emissions, a plan to cut methane emissions by almost half, and a price on carbon. We have oil and gas producers with experience in deploying new technologies designed to reduce their carbon footprint. We have regulations to protect the health and safety of the workers who produce that oil, and we also have legislation and a government committed to defending their human rights as well. We know that a growing number of markets are interested in oil produced according to some basic norms of social and environmental responsibility. Madam Chair, that's something Alberta can deliver.

Currently nearly all the oil produced in western Canada goes to one market, as we know, and that's the U.S. For much of the last decade Canada has been selling to the United States at a discount to the world price for similar oil products. Of course, the U.S. will remain an important market for our Alberta oil exports, but access to tidewater and markets beyond the U.S. will provide producers with more options and the ability to react quickly to market conditions, moving crude supplies to higher priced markets as supply and demand conditions change. It will also ensure that Alberta's crudes, both heavy and light, are able to secure the highest prices.

In closing, Madam Chair, our government understands the great responsibility that comes with this legislation, and that is why we have pursued all options before arriving at this point. We know that there is potential for impacts on Albertans if we are forced to use this legislation. The powers in the legislation are not to be taken lightly. They should not be used cavalierly to score cheap political points at the expense of Alberta energy producers, the workers they employ, or the communities where they're based.

But make no mistake, Madam Chair, that if we need to use these powers, we absolutely will. We are prepared to use every tool at our disposal to defend Albertans, to defend the right of Albertans to get the best possible price for resources we own, to protect public funding for the vital public services all working families rely on, to defend Alberta's and Canada's progress on addressing climate change, and to preserve Alberta's and Canada's economic prosperity.

I look forward to hearing more from the members in the Chamber and to passing this bill, and I look forward to hearing more input on the amendment. It's important, the amendment as well as this bill. We need to get it right, but we all need to get it done, and we need to get it done together.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Minister of Energy for bringing in this bill and supporting the amendment. As you might have followed the debate in this House and outside of the House, our party and our leader and our caucus colleagues, every one of us, were eagerly waiting for this for more than eight, nine months. We would love to work with the government and everyone in this House to send a unified voice and message to the rest of the world that we are all together in this House working on this bill. If the rogue governments in our neighbouring provinces are trying to attack the livelihood of Albertans, we have to stand together and send them a message.

We know that the government has good intentions to use this judiciously to meet our goal of getting access to tidewater. This is a good tool, and we are hoping the minister and the Premier will use it as soon as possible. To strengthen this further and to contribute our part, I rise to propose a minor amendment. If you don't mind, I'll pass this around.

Madam Chair, we understand that the minister doesn't want to misuse this. She always said that she would be fair. That's what she said. She talked to the stakeholders in Calgary. You know, if the government of B.C. continues to obstruct this pipeline, then we want her and the Premier to be able to use this option of shutting the taps. That's why I'm proposing this minor amendment, and I'm asking everyone in the House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to subamendment SA1? Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the member's subamendment, and I have to say that I believe that it makes the amendment much stronger. I believe that our whole caucus will be able to support both the subamendment and the amendment as proposed by the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill if we have the subamendment from the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Thank you very much for the camaraderie and the working togetherness that we've seen in the past few minutes. I want to thank the member opposite, and I hope that all my colleagues in the House support this subamendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, you're ready for the question?

[Motion on subamendment SA1 carried]

The Chair: We're back on amendment A1 as amended. Any other speakers to this amendment?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Are there any further speakers to the bill? Any questions, comments, or amendments to Bill 12?

Seeing none, you're ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, I'd just like to ask that we rise and report progress on Bill 9 and report on Bill 12. There's been so much good work done today that I think it's a good point to rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 12. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 9. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the Assembly's records.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. The motion is carried. The Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875