



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 14, 2018

Day 29

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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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-Hawthorn (NDP)
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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)
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Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
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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.

Monday, May 14, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us each in our own way pray or reflect in the celebration of motherhood and the mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers of our wonderful province.

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

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a couple of distinguished guests sitting in your gallery: the high commissioner for India to Canada, His Excellency Vikas Swarup, and his wife, Aparna Swarup. His Excellency's visit offers Alberta and India the opportunity to discuss potential co-operation across Canada, across government, academia, business, and more. With growing economies in both our jurisdictions, there's enormous potential to expand bilateral trade and collaboration. I look forward to working with His Excellency on further developing and strengthening our relationship with India. I would now like to ask the high commissioner and Mrs. Swarup to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire – it's a tremendous honour, as always, to introduce to you and through you students from a school in my constituency, Lycée Louis Pasteur. Les étudiants et étudiantes sont accompagnés par leurs enseignants. The students are accompanied today by their teachers Nicole Pereversoff and Ryan Taylor. If I can ask all the students and teachers from Lycée Louis Pasteur to please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to announce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature staff from the Department of Treasury Board and Finance. I'd ask

that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome as I call their names: Heather Ford, Carla MacLeod, Jared Anuik, Mary McPhail, Arlene Hendrickson, Dylan Corcoran, Bijon Brown, Rebecca Isbister, Mason Meyers, and Cindy Yang. Please stand up. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I had the honour of standing on the Legislature steps with parents, families, and advocates along with my colleague the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I want to recognize some incredible advocates for their courage and commitment on behalf of children with disabilities and their families, and I want to thank them on behalf of our government and let them know that we are committed to working with them. I would ask them to rise as I call their names: Marcy Oakes Henschel, Jennifer Shipley, Angela Anderson, Sabrina Park, Sandra Temple, Victoria Hampson, Shirley Samuel, Angela Seitz, Francie Astorino, Stephanie Ballard, Li Luo, Yufeng Zhang, Adolph Zelmer, and Kristina Peters. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. The first is to you and to the rest of the Assembly Ms Jenn Thompson, who is the firebrand that held the rally on the steps of the Legislature today, a dedicated mother, activist of children with autism and other disabilities. She spoke passionately at the rally with dozens of parents on the Legislature steps about internal policy that has replaced direct therapy for children with a consultation-only model, laying the burden of treatment on parents. They've also raised serious concerns about the accountability of families with supports for children with disabilities, and I've referred that to the Auditor General. She is seated in the public gallery. I'd ask her to rise and be recognized by the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Dr. Swann: Thank you for indulging me with a second introduction, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Mr. David Renwick and Brent Korte. Please stand and be recognized. They are, respectively, the general manager of Adapt Pharma, who produce a nasal delivery of naloxone now being used in Ontario and Quebec; David is visiting Alberta to explore its application to our opioid crisis. Brent, a mental health advocate and consultant representing Adapt Pharma, supports a number of life science companies in engaging government. They are seated in the public gallery. Please rise and let us recognize them.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you some of the individuals behind the annual EPCOR RiverFest presented by the River Valley Alliance. EPCOR RiverFest celebrates and connects Albertans with our hidden gem, the North Saskatchewan River. It also draws attention to the river as a critical water resource in our region, one that is to be protected and enjoyed. I'd ask my guests to rise as I call your names: Mr. Brent Collingwood, executive director of the RVA; Ms Connie Smart, RVA marketing and communications manager; and Andrew Laycock with EPCOR government relations. I would ask that they now receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Disturbance in the gallery] I rise today to introduce to you and through you some amazing Albertans and dear, dear friends of the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. Naomi Pedersen and her husband are the proud parents of seven children and four foster children whom they love dearly. They work every day to support and educate their children while being active community members and fierce advocates. I'm so lucky to have met these folks. They reached out because of their natural love for children and their knowledge that family is so important for healthy societies. I'm going to say your names, and if you could please rise as I say your names: Naomi Pedersen, Talia Pedersen, Isaac Pedersen, Kamilah Pedersen, Hannah Pedersen, Anaya Pedersen, Robyn Bowyer, and Violet Bowyer. If we could please give them the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I must say, hon. members, that it's nice to hear a child's cry in the place occasionally. Very refreshing.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

1:40

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you two of my constituents, Mary and Dean Michailides. They live in the vibrant constituency of Edmonton-Glenora, and they're seated in the members' gallery. Mary has been an educator, consultant, and leader for 35 years, and Dean is a principal at Centre High here in downtown Edmonton. Mary is a founding member of the Zebra Child Protection Centre, and at the time she first had a child disclose the experiences she'd received as a survivor of sexual assault – that was more than 20 years ago – Mary chose not to put the child in the police car alone. She instead drove the child with her to the headquarters, and she stayed with her. That was really a first that we'd experienced here in Edmonton. Since that ordeal she's become very active in finding a different model to protect children experiencing abuse, and I'm so proud of the work that she does to support our most vulnerable children. I thank her for her work in the community, especially with Zebra centre, of which she was a founding member. I'd ask that both Mary and Dean please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a couple of home-schooling families in my riding. As I say your name, I'd like you to please rise. We'll start with Lindy McKay, Maxwell McKay, Hyrum McKay, and Daniel McKay; and we also have Mireyah Proffitt and Sariah Proffitt. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I had the honour of standing with the Minister of Community and Social Services to stand with parents of children with disabilities, with their families, their advocates, many people who just want to be known as mom and dad. I'm thankful that they were able to come in and join us today in our Assembly, and I want to thank them for their dedicated advocacy and recognize their courage in bringing forward their

stories and also their children with them here today. I ask them to rise as I call their names: Claire Wilde, Kristi Rouse, Peter McDonald, Leanne Hart, Helen Hampson, Lisa Bazzardeth, Helen Oakes, Chantelle deVisser, Debbie deVisser, James Gauthier, Aaliyah deVisser, Tammy Suarez; I also recognize those that wished to come. Thank you again for coming here, and thank you for your work. I'd ask all members to extend the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

United Conservative Party Policies

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend the UCP held their first convention, where they at long last laid out some actual policy on how they'd govern our province, and for that we thank them, as do, I think, a number of Albertans, because in doing so, they clearly displayed and doubled down on some truly risky ideology, risky ideology like claiming to support mental health while dehumanizing individuals struggling with substance use as addicts injecting poison into their veins and suggesting that peer support groups for vulnerable youth are Trojan Horses for secret sexual curriculum. Risky ideology is stoking resentment based on those views for political gain and then feigning surprise when your membership refuses to listen when you beg them not to vote to out gay kids and block them from joining life-saving GSAs.

Risky ideology is planning a \$700 million tax cut to benefit less than 10 per cent of Albertans and cuts in spending on health care, education, and other supports for everyone else.

Risky ideology is believing that real barriers that women face in getting into politics are socialist crap, that a cabinet with more women than men is patronizing, and that feminism is a dirty word. Risky ideology is refusing to debate or vote on behalf of your constituents on a bill ensuring women have safe, dignified access to a legal health care service. Risky ideology is believing that young women old enough to drive, work, and consent to sex can't be trusted to make their own reproductive choices. And risky ideology is promising that your policies will be developed democratically by your grassroots members, not imposed by a leader until you don't like what they propose and then declaring: I hold the pen on the platform.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected by the people of Edmonton-Centre to stand against those sorts of risky ideas. I'm proud our government continues to stand by the people of Alberta to make their lives better and more affordable, that we, in the words of Don Braid, are working "to level social gender and minority inequalities in Alberta," and that we are working to build a diversified economy, rooted in a recovery built to last because that is an ideology I can believe in.

Electric Power System

Mr. Loewen: This government's handling of the electricity file has been boondoggle after boondoggle. First, this government increased the taxes on specified gas emitters to the tune of 70 per cent and rising. They also initiated accelerated phase-out of coal-fired generators. Of the 18 coal-fired plants 12 were already planned to phase out under their natural life cycles, which would have left no cost to taxpayers. The six newest plants, which, of

course, were the most efficient, are being shut down well ahead of their life cycle, at enormous cost to taxpayers.

These changes and others caused electricity companies to return their contracts to the Balancing Pool, exercising the “more unprofitable” clause of their contracts. This government, only too happy to blame everyone else for their own mistakes, decided to sue these companies for exercising their rights written in their contract. Further, these actions and costs have sent shivers through the investment community, making potential investors in our electricity markets even more uncertain.

On top of all this, the government has tried to sell an interesting story to Albertans with their legislation to cap electricity prices at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. They claim that they are helping Albertans, but really they are just trying to hide the cost of their policies from consumers. The fact is that the average cost of electricity was 2.2 cents per kilowatt hour in 2016 and 1.8 cents a kilowatt hour in 2017, but now, after NDP meddling, the price for the regulated rate option in April 2018 was 7.9 cents a kilowatt hour. Now the government is subsidizing green electricity when it goes below 3.7 cents a kilowatt hour, placing all the risk with Alberta taxpayers.

The electricity policies of this NDP government have been an abject failure, and they need to come clean and admit it. Albertans want to know: how much did the lawsuits, the accelerated coal phase-out, the additional cost to the Balancing Pool, the electricity cap, the renewable electricity program, and all the other market manipulations cost and will continue to cost Albertans? The ratepayers and taxpayers of this province deserve a straight answer, yet the government refuses to give one. If you want to prove you're on the right track, give Albertans the information so they can decide. I think Albertans will be unpleasantly surprised. The Auditor General needs to take a look into these mistakes and others.

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

Stanley Knowles

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent comments in this House regarding decorum during question period have made me think about Stanley Knowles, a decent and compassionate man known as the conscience of Parliament. Stanley Knowles became a United Church minister in 1933, and he quickly realized that it was not enough to preach compassion and fairness from the pulpit; he needed to be part of the struggle. Winnipeg at the time was the home of Canadian progressive thought, and it was there that Knowles ran under the banner of the CCF, the precursor of the New Democratic Party. He won a by-election in 1942, thus beginning an astounding run of 13 federal election wins, broken by only one loss.

Knowles' maiden speech was an appeal for social justice, lower unemployment, better pensions, and improved housing. It was a mark of the esteem in which he was held by all members in the House that his pleas for equity for the less fortunate were always listened to with respect, no matter how often he made them. Knowles' work ethic and grasp of parliamentary procedure were awe inspiring. He became known as the Gretzky of Parliament. His dignity and decency always kept him above the rough and tumble of political frays. Former Prime Minister Joe Clark remembered the parliamentarian crossing the floor to give him a pep talk. “With Stanley,” he said, “you had a sense of collegiality in the fraternity of Parliament.”

Stanley Knowles toiled in Ottawa for four decades, until a stroke in 1981 forced him to retire from politics and led him to being given the unprecedented distinction of being made an honorary table officer of the House of Commons by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

This allowed him to spend his retirement viewing parliamentary debates from the floor of the House.

Thank you very much.

Flood Mitigation and Recovery in Southern Alberta

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, residents of southeastern Alberta have been struggling to put back their lives from a devastating overland flood which took place in the spring of this year. Thirteen homes were flooded and 831 overland flooding sites were logged in the MD of Taber alone, but it could have been worse, much worse. If it weren't for the quick and proactive responses of many, there could have been tens of millions of dollars more in damage.

Just one example is the great work of the St. Mary River, the Taber, and the Bow River irrigation districts' team, that worked collaboratively to combat Mother Nature. Recognizing that when the ice started to flow in the main canal, it would destroy bridges and canal walls, they brought in 40 excavators to clear the floating ice. They worked continuously for two weeks. Due to their proactive and quick response, they are now able to provide irrigated water to the farmers of southern Alberta, and not one bridge was destroyed, Mr. Speaker. Had they not been proactive, many farmers may not have received irrigated water this year, which would have been an unquantifiable cost.

1:50

Now the cleanup starts. The devastation, in spite of the mitigating efforts of so many, is immense. The question I hear most is whether DRP funding will be made available and when it is coming. The MD of Taber has had to put on hold two road construction projects this year in response to the increased cost of this flood, so DRP funding needs to be allocated quickly. My hope is that the government will reward the district's implementation of best practices, that saved tens of millions, rather than punish them for taking concrete action, as they did. We want future disaster events in this province to be handled in this proactive way as being proactive mitigates the overall cost to all Albertans.

I salute the forward-thinking individuals in my communities and in my riding. I look forward to working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs in freeing up the much anticipated DRP funding.

Oral Question Period

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

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I could just begin by expressing our concern for the minister responsible for seniors, with her sad health news today, and our encouragement to her to get well soon.

Bill 12

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it was on March 8 that the government announced its intention to bring forward legislation to allow it to turn off the taps to British Columbia to protest that government's blockage of the Trans Mountain pipeline. That legislation could have been passed in a day. It's now 10 weeks later. Why has this government been delaying its own keynote legislation to turn off the taps of Alberta oil to British Columbia?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would start by responding, simply by saying that we're not delaying it, but it is certainly a piece of legislation that needs a certain amount of

oversight and the opportunity to be debated, so that's what's happening. I expect that we'll see that piece of legislation pass later this week, and then we will do what we need to do in the best interests of all Albertans, to do what the members opposite have so far been unable to do, which is to get a pipeline built to tidewater.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the government itself has voted to foreclose debate on that bill several times. We're in the peculiar situation where the Official Opposition has been trying to accelerate the government's keynote legislation and the government has been delaying it. It makes us wonder how really serious they are about the threat. We know that the NDP Premier of British Columbia doesn't take it very seriously. After meeting with our Premier in Ottawa last month, he said that it was essentially an empty threat. So I ask again: why has the government been dragging its feet on its own keynote bill?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have not been doing that. But, you know, ready, fire, aim: that is the approach that the members opposite would like to take with respect to getting this pipeline built. That is probably in part the explanation for why, over nine years when they were in Ottawa and their friends were here in Alberta, they couldn't get a pipeline built to tidewater. We have every expectation that we will use that legislation in a way that best supports Albertans in all of their objectives, including ensuring that we get that pipeline built, and – you know what? – we will get that pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a coastal pipeline had been approved, and then this Premier told her close friend and ally Justin Trudeau that he could go ahead and cancel Northern Gateway. She surrendered to his veto of Energy East, she and Justin Trudeau, her ally, surrendered to Barack Obama's veto of Keystone XL, and now here we are, 10 weeks after a threat, with no action. Does the Premier not understand that Albertans don't just want empty words? They want action. Will the government agree to pass that bill at all three stages this afternoon?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is very impressive in terms of his ability to rewrite history in a way that is very disconnected with, oh, the facts and also history. That being said, what we will do is that we will ensure that that bill is debated properly and that everyone gets an opportunity to engage in it. It will be passed this week, subject, of course, to the efforts of the members opposite. But we will ensure that it's passed this week, and we will move forward with respect to that bill in a thoughtful, strategic, cool-handed way. That is the way we will get this pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'll take that as a no, that the Premier will not take us up on our offer to expedite her most important legislation.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government spent 9 million tax dollars telling Albertans why it was a great idea to punish them with the NDP carbon tax, and now they're going to spend \$1.2 million at the eleventh hour to advertise on behalf of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Why was it so much more important for the government to spend tax dollars advertising in favour of their punitive carbon tax rather than in favour of market access for Alberta oil?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I will say that given that the member opposite, when he was in Ottawa, actually went on national TV to say that pipelines are not a national priority – it is true that perhaps if we'd spent just a fraction of that amount educating the member opposite when he was allegedly standing up for the people of Alberta, it might have been a better use of our money. That being said, our campaign is working. The polls are showing that the level of support in B.C. and across this country is growing. We're doing exactly what we need to do. I wish the member opposite would get onboard and hope for our success rather than cheering for the failure of Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I said no such thing. When, in 2015, I was on the front page of the *Victoria Times Colonist* arguing for coastal pipelines, the NDP was attending rallies and lobbying against Keystone XL, lobbying against Northern Gateway. Why did it take the government until 17 days before the potential cancellation of Trans Mountain to finally come up with \$1 million in advertising on behalf of Trans Mountain? Why didn't they do this nine months ago, when the New Democrats came to office in Victoria?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that this project is getting closer and closer to getting built, and we are seeing success after success. Just last week in the courts we had two more decisions which bode very well for the outcome of this project. In addition, we're seeing the polls show increasing and growing amounts of support as a result of reasoned, respectful, fact-based conversations that the people of Alberta, all the people of Alberta, well, except for maybe one or two, are having with respect to the people of B.C. In addition, we're having business leaders and community leaders come here to Alberta later this week to continue this work. We will get the pipeline built. We will get it done.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't seem to be able to take responsibility for the fact that she gave her ally and fellow New Democrat John Horgan a pass when he came to office last July on a threat to do everything possible to shut down Trans Mountain. She attacked our suggestions for potentially turning off the taps. She did not advertise on behalf of Trans Mountain until now, 17 days before its potential cancellation. Again the question is: why did the NDP government wait so long to get in the game?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the announcement that we made last week is not the first round of advertising, nor is it the first round of efforts to engage with the people of B.C. on the matter of the pipeline, so, first of all, the member has his facts incorrect there. Secondly, we've been engaging in a number of different strategies to get this pipeline built. We didn't move into a corner and start having temper tantrums and then wonder why nobody was talking to us. That particular strategy was tried for nine consecutive years, and it resulted in abject failure. Thank goodness other people are in charge of this, and – you know what? – because of that, we're going to get it done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Yes, Mr. Speaker, she's delighted that her close friend and ally Justin Trudeau is in charge of this. She's happy that he cancelled Northern Gateway. She doesn't care that he killed Energy East or that he surrendered on Keystone XL.

Carbon Levy and Nonprofit Organizations

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Community Kitchen Program of Calgary delivers 1.3 million pounds of food to 190,000 people, but they are deeply concerned. They said that it is very tough with the higher gas prices now. "This keeps us up at night," they said. One of the reasons for the higher gas prices is the higher NDP carbon tax. Is the government happy that they're squeezing nonprofits trying to deliver food to poor Calgarians?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, let me be very clear that the vast majority of the price increases that the member opposite is talking about are as a result of an overall increase in gas prices. To suggest that it's all because of the carbon levy is misleading; hardly surprising, not out of character, but nonetheless it is that. Meanwhile, our government is working with social agencies through a number of programs that we have engaged in over the last three years because we are focused on making life better for all Albertans, including lower income Albertans, and we will continue that record.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I've said that the carbon tax is part of the reason for higher fuel prices. It's about six cents right now, but the NDP want to raise that by 67 per cent. Why? Because their close ally Justin Trudeau asked them to. Now, the Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research says: when our costs go up, it means a reduction in the amount of money that can come back to support the programs that we offer. They said this in the context of higher gas prices, which are partly driven by the higher carbon tax. Will the government reconsider their pledge to Justin Trudeau to raise the NDP carbon tax by 67 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that I find it interesting that the member opposite is standing up for an organization that is focused on doing drug and alcohol treatment, which is important, after a convention a week and a half ago where you had motions actually suggesting charging people for treatment because they've made the choice to become subject to addictions, illnesses. I've got to say: a little rich for folks over there. That being said, we will continue to do the work that is necessary to support those kinds of organizations and many other important organizations which deliver that important service.

Mr. Kenney: There was no such motion adopted.

Mr. Speaker, the Women in Need Society provides food and services to underprivileged women. It expends about 38,000 litres of fuel every year, meaning that the carbon tax has already cost them \$2,500 a year. Now the NDP wants to raise that carbon tax by 67 per cent to get the approval of their close ally Justin Trudeau. Why are they placing their alliance with Justin Trudeau ahead of the good people at the Women in Need Society?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The member opposite is ignoring the many things that our government has done to support an organization like Women in Need, the many things that we will continue to do, and

the supports that go to not only those organizations but the people they serve; for instance, as a result of having a progressive tax situation, by having rebates to low-income people through the carbon levy program, as a result of the child tax benefit, and as a result of the numerous things our government has done to stand up for women in need. We will continue that record. We will not let their record hurt those women.

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

Homelessness Initiatives

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the warm weather we are currently experiencing, it may come as a surprise to many Albertans that Inn from the Cold is seeing a spike in users that is leaving them at or near capacity. Landlords aren't allowed to evict tenants during dangerous winter months, and rightly so, but this leads to a surge in the number of evictions as the weather begins to improve. To the Premier: what is your government doing to make sure organizations like Inn from the Cold have the resources to deal with the increased user numbers?

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have been working with our partners in that area, and we have provided stable and predictable funding to make sure that they can provide the services to Albertans who rely on these services. If we were to take advice from that side, the proposed cuts each and every day would have made the situation worse. We have increased funding in all four of our budgets to make sure Albertans get the services they need.

Mr. Fraser: Affordable housing and programs like Inn from the Cold are vital parts in dealing with homelessness and housing insecurity, but we need to be more proactive about keeping people housed to begin with. We can save the system money if we focus on keeping people housed instead of rehousing them. That stability has associated benefits to the health and wellness of families who are no longer being evicted. To the Premier. We need to support organizations like Inn from the Cold, but we also need an alternative, proactive solution to keep people in their homes. Where is your government on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I said, instead of cutting funding for homelessness housing, we are investing almost \$170 million in the homelessness file. We have invested \$5.2 million in support for 200 new permanent supportive housing. We are also investing \$1.2 billion to make sure that affordable housing is available, that there is a permanent solution available for Albertans who rely on these supports.

Mr. Fraser: The problem that is shared by people at risk of losing their housing as well as the nonprofits that assist them is the lack of cash on hand. Both groups are usually very tight on budgets, and small increases in costs can have dire consequences. This means that a carbon tax actually has a higher impact on these families and nonprofits, who have to pay increased costs every day but then have to wait months for rebates. You can understand that those months feel like a very long time when you're struggling to make ends meet. To the Premier: will you show some understanding and some

compassion and exempt nonprofits and low-income Albertans from the carbon tax?

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that when the climate leadership plan was brought forward, we considered those. That's why two-thirds of Albertans are getting those rebates, so they're not burdened with that. As I said before, the reason we are facing these challenges is that that side over there – the member was a part of that – for 40 years ignored these, and those social deficits were off-loaded onto Albertans. Now we are making those investments. We are investing \$1.2 billion to make sure that housing is available for Albertans who need it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Family Support for Children with Disabilities

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The family support for children with disabilities program is intended to provide vital resources to children and their families. Many families consider this program a lifeline, but we've also heard from families that feel the program isn't working the way it's supposed to. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what is your ministry doing to ensure that children and their families have the supports they need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Let me begin by saying that children with disabilities deserve every opportunity to be successful. As a government we are here to support families and children. We do know that parents of children with disabilities, many of whom have joined us here, work tirelessly for their children, and they know best about their children's needs. I stood with them out on the Legislature steps, I heard their concerns, and I'm absolutely committed to working with them to ensure that they get the supports they need.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're hearing from parents that they feel that too much pressure is being put on them by the FSCD program. Does the minister support parent training as a replacement to direct supports for children with disabilities?

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I guess, first and foremost, I will say that they are parents first, and we do not support the idea that they should take on the role of professionals. These supports are there to support their children. We had listening sessions over the last week, four sessions, and I'm committed to working with them, listening to them, and taking action to make sure that this program responds to the needs of the children and their families. We will work with them to make sure we get this right.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Caseloads for FSCD are growing, and parents are concerned about cuts to the program. To the same minister: what investments have been made in FSCD,

and are there any plans to make cuts in order to manage caseload growth? What would the effects of these cuts be?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. First, I want to say that even during the worst economic downturn we made a decision to put Alberta's families first. We didn't make any cuts to this program. I would say that we added \$50 million to this program in the last four budgets, and we will continue to work with the parents and their children to make sure that this program responds to their needs.

Thank you very much.

Cannabis Legalization

Mr. Fildebrandt: The Stone Age policy of Canada's prohibition is finally expected to come to an end this summer, but even once it's legalized, thousands of Canadians will still carry criminal records. They will continue to be criminally penalized for something that is no longer a crime. When the Wheat Board was abolished, Prime Minister Harper pardoned those who were charged with the crime of selling wheat. One of them is our colleague from Drumheller-Stettler. Will the Minister of Justice call on her federal counterpart to provide a full pardon for those who carry a criminal record for violations that will no longer be illegal?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, the issue the member raises is absolutely an issue that I think would be of interest to many people in Alberta and many people throughout this country. It rests within the jurisdiction of the federal government and is therefore a decision that they would need to make.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that there's a lot of good in this government's cannabis legalization plan but that there is a notable hole – legitimate business owners like Marc and Jodie Emery, who operated with a storefront and paid taxes, are lumped in with organized crime, like the mafia and Hells Angels, in being prohibited from operating a licensed cannabis business in Alberta – will the Minister of Justice amend our legislation to ensure that legitimate business owners like these are not treated the same as violent criminals?

Mr. Ceci: Under the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission, AGL Ceci, I just want to say that there's a process. All people who want to be legitimate sellers of cannabis in Alberta have to go through that, be monitored, and run through the AGLC. Everybody's background will be checked as well as the people who are selling in the store will be checked. It's not a process of saying that we're lumping this group in with that group. Albertans want to know that everybody's record is stellar.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I just want to point out that you can't use a person's name in this House.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I guess a new slogan will be Pot is Good.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that while it's not perfect, Alberta has the best system in the country for the legal sale of cannabis, with no government weed stores with bureaucrats helping you pick out a bong, but for some reason the government believes that it can establish a monopoly on the online sales of cannabis – you can buy pot online right now without much trouble even though it's illegal,

so good luck with that. They even expect to lose money on online sales. Only the government could possibly lose money selling pot. Can we agree that after we legalize it, we should privatize it?

Mr. Ceci: Again, with regard to the legal sale of cannabis, once that comes through, with the federal government approval to make that happen, the government of Alberta will be the online seller of cannabis. We think that's in the interest of all Albertans. Alberta will have a social responsibility to deliver cannabis in their online sales and not to promote it and to make wild assertions about their cannabis. It'll be sold socially responsibly, and for a couple of years it'll be challenging to make a profit.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans are currently struggling to find work. Alberta was once prosperous, and workers from many different jurisdictions came to Alberta for well-paying jobs. Now what we are seeing from other jurisdictions are activists that are trying to shut down our energy industry and the jobs that go with it. I'm referring to the Tides Foundation, Packard Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers foundation, and the like. They don't have Canada's national interests at heart and are far from it. Minister, what are you doing to stand up to these foreign special-interest groups that are doing everything in their power to block the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Mr. Ceci: I think it's clear, Mr. Speaker, what the government of Alberta is doing to promote it and to assure Albertans that it's in the interests of Canada that we get this right and we get a pipeline to tidewater. We are out there with: making Canada work. There's an advertising campaign to convince all Canadians that it's in all of our interests to see this pipeline get to tidewater as quickly as possible. We'll continue to stand up for Albertans and Canada in that regard.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this NDP government has a very poor record of standing up for Alberta when it comes to our energy industry and given that this NDP government has yet to pass Bill 12, which would allow the government to turn off the taps to B.C., and given that this NDP is still punishing unemployed Albertans with its expensive carbon tax that has not moved any opponents to the pipeline from no to yes – Minister, we only have 17 days left until Kinder Morgan's decision – when will Albertans finally see concrete action to stop those who are illegally obstructing the pipeline?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've been standing up every day since we were elected to support our most important industry here in Alberta, not just with the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline but with Keystone XL and line 3. Anything we can do to promote market access, we've been doing. You know what? It's starting to work. An article this weekend in the *Herald* talked about: "Slowly but surely, pipeline backers [are] winning 'hearts and minds'" of not just people in B.C. but in all of Canada.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we already have the most environmentally responsible oil and gas industry on the planet and that we continue to improve and given that we've already seen job losses on the Trans Mountain expansion sites as a result of the uncertainty created by pipeline opponents and given that the government in B.C. has not yet changed its opposition to the project, since the government isn't rushing to pass Bill 12, what is being done to ensure certainty for this project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, again, we have been working very hard, and sometimes it takes one conversation at a time. Many of our ministers have been going across Canada. Our Premier has been doing hard work talking to people about why it's not just important for Alberta and not just for B.C. but for all of Canada. Despite the naysayers in the opposition benches we are winning the hearts and minds of British Columbians and Canadians thanks to the leadership, as I mentioned, of my colleagues and our Premier. Over the next 20 years we know that this pipeline is going to generate \$5.7 billion just to B.C.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Caribou Protection

Mr. Loewen: The environment minister went with a delegation of Alberta industry and community representatives to Ottawa to meet with the federal ministry to talk about caribou plans. Would the minister confirm that the federal government is very willing to work with Alberta on the caribou issue and not unilaterally enact a protection order as long as Alberta shows progress towards dealing with this issue?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is quite right. We did go to Ottawa. We secured a financial commitment from the federal government, so it was a very successful trip, in no small part due to, I think, the interventions of the municipalities who came with us and who told their stories of the effect of range planning on their communities. You know, the fact of the matter is that the federal government is willing to be good partners to us on this – they understand where we are coming from – but at the same time everyone is being pushed forward by the courts, and there's very little we can do in that context.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that a protection order is not the preferred route as it has negative effects on the economy and the people in the region, would you be willing to push the federal government to work with the province to expand the section 11 agreement, if necessary, so that there is a reasonable alternative to a protection order?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the member is correct. The section 11 agreement is one of the tools in our tool box. We need to make sure that it's the right tool for us, and we need to make sure that it aligns with the funding commitment that we did secure from the federal government. You know, the Species at Risk Act is a very inflexible instrument. There were nine years that the hon. member's leader was in Ottawa that

he could have used to change it, and he didn't, so this is what we're stuck with now.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the federal government committed to giving money to Alberta to help with the costs associated with the caribou issue, can the minister confirm exactly how much and exactly what products that money will be spent on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do not have that information at this time.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

(continued)

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, last month the Premier said that the NDP government would file for intervenor status in the dilbit reference case, but she has a record. She failed to file a brief to the parliamentary committee in opposition to Bill C-69. Kinder Morgan wants their permits to build from all levels of government not to be held up by endless court cases and foreign-funded special interests who are NDP fellow travellers like Al Gore. Has the NDP government filed for intervenor status in the dilbit reference case with the Court of Appeal of B.C.? Minister of Justice, if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in an earlier question, we have fought every step of the way for market access, and that is certainly true in the case of the Trans Mountain going to B.C. We've fought in the court and won now 14 out of 14 times, and we continue to have intervenor status as necessary. We're doing everything we can to make this pipeline go, and absolutely it's going to go.

2:20

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that effective May 22 the Liberals in Ottawa have cut off the committee work on Bill C-69, the federal bill that makes changes to the National Energy Board, despite having 470 amendments to consider, to the Premier: in your closed-door meetings with your best friend Justin Trudeau did you object to Ottawa running roughshod over Alberta's energy industry and the Canadian economy with the dangers of C-69, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the reference case brought forward by the B.C. government is not good for Canadian jobs, it's not good for the industry, and it's not good for economic union. Frankly, it's just not good for our country. Essentially, B.C. wants the power to unilaterally throttle our resources and hurt the Canadian economy, and I would suggest that they be very, very careful in what they ask for. Our Premier has instructed officials to immediately apply to be a party in this reference case, and we are going to aggressively stand up for Alberta and, frankly, for Canadians and all economic interests.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that Bill C-69 allows the federal minister unlimited powers to reject major projects like pipelines before an environmental assessment is carried out – the Alberta NDP government never filed any briefing in opposition to C-69, but I did – Premier, why have you failed to stand up for Alberta's

industries and defend the Constitution against this federal Liberal government that disrespects the provinces?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I want to thank the member for bringing this issue forward, and I certainly wonder why, when his leader was in Ottawa for nearly two decades, they didn't address this at that time, Mr. Speaker. These are the kinds of things that compel people to question the determination of the members opposite, actually, on these issues. Conservative leaders sat in Ottawa and in this House here in Alberta for a decade, almost, at the same time and didn't get this pipeline to tidewater. Our Premier has made significant progress on this file in just three short years, and we are going to get our pipeline built. You can mark my words.

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

Classroom Improvement Fund

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since being elected in 2015, I have visited a lot with teachers. Not once have I ever heard a request for a raise, but what I did hear about was the need for classroom funding support, support promised by governments before but never delivered. The last collective bargaining agreement saw teachers and our government come together to put kids first with the commitment of \$75 million in classroom improvement funding, and on a visit to SouthPointe school in Fort Saskatchewan we saw the impact of those funds first-hand. Would the Minister of Education please update the House about how the classroom improvement funds are being used to improve the lives of Alberta's students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the classroom improvement fund has been very successful. We've seen more than 400 new teachers and support staff hired across the province. In Peace-Wapiti and Wetaskiwin school divisions they started Empower Reading, which was a comprehensive approach to teaching students to read. Horizon school set up a policy called calm, alert, and learning, which helps teachers to talk about diversity in school. We see many, many interesting projects.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that each school has different needs and given that teachers and locally elected school boards are best suited to address those needs, to the same minister: how has the classroom improvement fund specifically helped students like those in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville with their literacy skills?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. The SouthPointe school in Fort Saskatchewan is the first new school that was built in 30 years – can you imagine? – while the whole city grew by more than many times that amount. Anyways, what they are using it for is for comprehension and the tracking of reading comprehension over the course of the school year. You can see quantifiable improvements by focusing on young learners and their literacy from ages seven and eight.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our classrooms continue to grow and given that we know what the UCP

wants to do to publicly funded education, to the same minister: how have you ensured that students in rural schools have the same access to the classroom improvement funding as those in large urban centres like Edmonton and Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the classroom improvement fund is spread out across all 61 school boards. I mentioned some examples of both rural initiatives and urban initiatives. People are focusing in on mathematics skills and critical thinking skills. You know, the best way to make sure that kids get the help that they need is to make sure you hire teachers and support staff, which we're doing through this fund. You do not help kids by making cuts and laying off teachers and support staff, as the UCP has suggested they would do.

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

Mathematics Education

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Falling math scores remain an issue for Alberta schools. The minister assured us during estimates that memorization and algorithms will be a fundamental part of the new curriculum which is being developed. However, my concern is for the students currently in the system, especially those in junior high and high school. These students cannot be left behind. How they are learning math now needs to change. To the minister: what specific changes to the way math is taught in our schools have been made to address falling math scores?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there's every reason why we need to build a new curriculum. You know, I found it very interesting that the member's leader said that he would put the curriculum into the shredder. Can you imagine that? We're building curriculum that will strengthen mathematics, and if we have a good idea, we're using it straight away. For example, I put the written section into the diploma exams for mathematics. We put in the no-calculator sections for the PATs for grade 9s. We're working hard with teachers, as I said, with the classroom improvement fund, funding specific initiatives. I'll tell you lots more about it later.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Calgary board of education has done significant work to tackle falling math scores, including hiring math coaches, with a focus on getting back to the basics, and given that this diversion away from discovery math has begun to show results, demonstrating once again the importance of being able to memorize times tables and demonstrate recall, again to the minister: what are you doing to provide leadership on the issue of falling math scores so that individual school boards do not have to fill in the gaps?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, as it happens, the school boards work together with us to improve education. The Calgary board of education: you know how they're doing that? They're using the classroom improvement fund, that we negotiated together, to make that investment. The best way they can do that is in hiring those coaches. You hire teachers, and you hire support staff. What you don't do is make reckless cuts towards education and compromise

the education of our students. We're there to make life better for our kids, and I think we're doing a pretty good job.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I recently had a first-year engineering student from an Alberta university write to me about discovery math and given that he stated – and I quote – that discovery math only helps a small percentage of students and that many fall behind, end quote, and given that he went on to say, quote, that as someone who uses high levels of math on an almost daily basis, discovery math does not help and that Alberta math scores have been dropping because of this, end quote, again to the minister: are you concerned that the way math is currently being taught in Alberta does not properly prepare students for postsecondary success?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very important to make some distinctions here. You know, we don't look at saying, "Back to basics" or "the old curriculum" or "the new curriculum." What you look for are the best tools every step of the way to make sure a kid learns math and English and critical thinking skills as well. You don't shy away from making investments even during tough economic times, as we did. We doubled down to make sacrifices in other areas to fund education for enrolment. I would suggest that the hon. member should take a second look. I don't know if you can do a do-over and allow him to vote for the Education budget. He didn't do it the first time, and that kind of was an indication of their true intentions.

Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre Parking

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, last week's question got results. On Friday AHS reported to me that the Westlock hospital helipad is now open.

But on to another project. Across the street from the Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre I understand AHS plans to replace a parkade with – get this – a new parkade. A real estate developer made an unsolicited offer to buy the air rights over this new parkade in the hopes of adding apartments to the neighbourhood, but AHS turned down the revenue. Can the Minister of Health explain: why is AHS turning down this surprise source of revenue?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for this opportunity to set the facts straight. We absolutely worked to make sure that that helipad was open as quickly as possible. It was literally the day after the member asked a question that we ensured it was back up and operational.

I also want to set the facts straight on some questions that were asked last week. The member said that things were shut down for two and a half hours with regard to an air ambulance. It was 10 minutes. They said that it was an urgent case. It was a routine transfer. Mr. Speaker, I'm sick of the mudslinging in this House. If you want to talk facts in improving health care, I'm there. I'm willing to do it with you. I welcome you to the table.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta Health Services is re-evaluating this matter at the joint capital projects table with the ministries of Health and Infrastructure and given that the Minister of Infrastructure deferred questions on this matter during estimates to the Minister of Health, with the NDP running a near \$9 billion deficit, can the Minister of Health provide an update on the re-evaluation of this proposal and advise: will the air rights for this parkade be put up for auction, bringing in potentially millions of dollars in new revenue for Alberta Health Services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

2:30

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. It is true that there is a need to ensure that staff and visitors have a place to park when they visit hospitals. I believe that it was at a former policy convention where some members opposite were talking about making parking free for everyone. Today they're talking about charging those same staff and visitors \$9 billion. Let's take some time to get your facts straight. Come to us with reasonable solutions. Of course, we're going to make sure that people have a place to park when they come and visit their grandparents, their loved ones, their children. I think that's the right thing to do, and it will be cost recovery.

Mr. van Dijken: Given, Mr. Speaker, that AHS funds parkade replacement projects out of the revenue generated from parking fees and given that visiting loved ones in care can exact an emotional toll, never mind having to pay for parking, is the Minister of Health in any way considering providing some amount of short-term free parking since AHS seems to have enough money to replace parkades with parkades without accepting millions in surprise revenue for condos and affordable housing?

Ms Hoffman: Well, let's fix some more facts. It's a Covenant Health facility. Covenant Health, just like AHS, ensures that they're not diverting funds from front-line services, not laying off nurses to provide free parking. There are certainly important investments to make sure that they're cost recovery. That's one of the reasons why they're asking for this to be done, so that they can build one facility while they are certainly replacing another one.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we be compassionate with people. We know that health outcomes are better when people have an opportunity to visit, but we're not going to lay off nurses and other important front-line providers. It's important that health be Health funded and that parking be cost recovery.

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

Elizabeth Métis Settlement Wildfire

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fire season is here, and the people of the Elizabeth Métis settlement in my constituency found themselves facing a state of emergency due to a fire this weekend. Could the minister please provide us with an update on the situation, its impact on the community, and the status of the wildfire within my area?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Thank you to the member for the question. It's an important question. There are some fires around the province right now, Mr. Speaker. We do empathize with the folks out there, specifically the Elizabeth Métis settlement. On the 12th of May a wildfire on the settlement did grow rapidly to over 300 hectares. They do have a state of local emergency and established an EOC and a reception centre. Fishing Lake and Cold Lake assisted with fire suppression. The fire is now being held. Fifteen residences were evacuated, and a mandatory evacuation remains in place due to hot spots although residents are allowed to return during the day to deal with animals and property issues.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that answer,

Minister. Given that this fire has forced the evacuation of residents and given that wildfires often behave in an unpredictable manner, could the minister please tell us what resources the government has dedicated to keeping both people and property safe from this blaze, and how long do you expect that these resources will be in place?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question. Well, it's a crossministry initiative, obviously, with Ag and Forestry right now, so right now there are resources out there. There are 860 firefighters out there. I don't have the specific numbers that are right there in Elizabeth. There are 84 helicopters, 79 pieces of heavy equipment, and 16 air tankers. We do know that, thankfully, power has been restored in the settlement. There is one firefighter, unfortunately, that was taken to hospital for smoke inhalation, but we are still working on the ground with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and with field officers to help.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for that fulsome answer. Again, given that people have been displaced from their homes, that have been threatened by this fire, can the minister please tell us how the evacuated residents are being accommodated and provided for in these serious and stressful circumstances?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, and thank you to the member again for the question. I do want to make sure that – I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the local volunteers and the folks on the ground out there, the first responders. The municipalities and the people out there have been absolutely phenomenal working on the ground. You know, I want to let them know that the POC is open 24/7. We are monitoring the situation daily, so everything we can do to adapt to the situation – we do know it's hot and it's windy out there. But it's also incumbent upon us as citizens to be ever vigilant. We will have the assistance there for those folks when they need it.

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

Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Construction

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new Grande Prairie hospital looks great from the outside. We know there's a lot of complex work to do inside, but we are hearing rumours of delays. Constituents are asking if this is true. To the Health or Infrastructure ministers: can the ministers confirm that this project is on schedule to open in 2019?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure members here on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure that we're doing everything possible to make sure that that hospital is completed in a timely fashion. Having said that, we inherited quite a situation when this government took office. The previous government had built an envelope for the hospital that was far too big for the needs of the hospital. It created many challenges, not the least of which was a significant overbudget situation, because they hadn't planned the hospital properly.

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the hospital project includes a parkade and given that we've not seen any construction activity yet on the parkade site, to the same ministers: can you confirm that the new parkade will be there when the hospital opens?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Well, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure I can undertake that question and provide a response to the hon. member. There are many difficulties associated with the poor planning related to that particular hospital, and the Infrastructure department officials have been working very hard in order to remedy those things. The next thing that needs to be done is continuing construction on the interior, including the mechanical, electrical, and drywall work. Site and landscaping work is under way and is expected to be completed in 2018.

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the hospital is supposed to be finished at the end of this year and open in 2019 and given that the constituents are very interested in the project and appreciate updates on it, to the same ministers: if the project runs into delays, will you commit to communicating this information to the constituents?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the minister I can assure the House and the people in Grande Prairie that everything is being done to diligently complete this very difficult project, which, unfortunately, was very badly planned by the previous government. We will provide continuous updates on the progress of the project.

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

Calgary Southwest and West Ring Road Construction

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Transportation: can you please give my constituents and Calgarians in general an update on where the southwest ring road construction is right now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question from the Member for Calgary-Bow. Construction continues along highways 8 and 22. They will require some speed reductions in some areas. Detours along Glenmore Trail, highway 8, and Sarcee Trail will be going into effect later in the summer. We'll be taking the proper steps to help Calgarians understand the effect of this work. The construction of the southwest Calgary ring road is a historic and much-needed project for Calgarians and Albertans alike.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What impacts will this construction have on the travelling public as far as traffic disruptions are concerned?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for that question. As with all projects, there's going to be some inconvenience during construction, but once it's complete, the southwest Calgary ring road will make

life better for all of those who make use of it and will improve the free flow of traffic. My department has worked closely with our contractor, and we've come up with a plan to have the least possible impact on the travelling public. There are detours, as I've mentioned. Some lanes will be narrowed, and the connection between highway 8 and Glenmore will be forced through a detour, so we do anticipate significant levels of service disruption, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for those updates. People in my riding are also waiting to hear about the completion of the ring road. What can you tell my constituents about the west Calgary ring road?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Calgary west ring road will complete the ring and will be the final leg, providing more than 100 kilometres of free-flow traffic around the city of Calgary. It's an approved project that's part of Transportation's 2017-2020 capital plan. The project remains a priority for this government, and we understand its importance to residents and businesses in the Calgary region.

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

2:40

Bill 12 (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in a question that was asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Premier indicated in regard to Bill 12 that they were not delaying the passage of Bill 12 but were in fact trying to make sure that this House could debate it. The question, though, then becomes why the government won't allow Bill 12 to come to the floor. Why does the government keep voting against the opposition on trying to get it to the floor to debate it?

Ms Hoffman: I'm just going to take this first one, and then I certainly welcome the Government House Leader to supplement in the other responses. I want to be very clear that Ottawa is in very serious and determined conversations with Kinder Morgan. I want to ensure Albertans that these discussions are focused on one outcome, and that's the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

With respect to Bill 12 the Premier made it very clear that our intent is to have it passed this week. We certainly welcome members to participate in that. We respect democracy and welcome them to participate in the debate on Bill 12, Bill 1, Bill 2, Bill 9. We'll see where they are when it comes to all of those bills, Mr. Speaker, because I think Albertans deserve to know.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it's been four weeks and the government repeatedly continues to stop this bill from coming to the floor to be discussed and that when they do allow it to the floor, they then vote to shut it down instead of dealing with this issue on behalf of Albertans, again my question to the government is: why will they not allow this bill to come to the floor to be debated and passed on behalf of Albertans? Why do they continue to delay it?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are many bills before this House. You know, the opposition thinks that they can pick and choose which bills they want to debate. They can't wait to debate Bill 12, and they can't wait to get out of the House when we deal with Bill 9. They can't have it both ways. The Premier has told the House that we will debate and pass this bill out of third reading this week. I'm sorry, hon. member; I don't know what the point is.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the point is that the Premier said that she was wanting this bill to be debated in this House, but the government continues to delay it. It's now acknowledged by the Government House Leader that he will not bring forward this piece of legislation. The question is why, first of all, but second, I'll just ask another question. Why did the Premier say that it was going to be debated in this House and then her Government House Leader won't allow it to be debated in this House?

Mr. Mason: Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the hon. member and I speak different languages, because I just said that it's going to be debated and passed out of third reading this week. I don't know. Does he have a hearing problem? I just don't understand the question. You know, we couldn't have been more clear. We will debate and pass Bill 12 and finish it this week.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: If you'd like to leave, hon. members, you have 15 seconds to do so.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Killarney 1 Affordable Housing Project in Calgary

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago a construction manager walked into my office because he felt compelled to come see me, his representative in this Assembly, and say thank you to our government for investing in Alberta's people and communities.

A few short years ago he had a lull in business and had not been paid for work completed. He was like so many contractors at the start of the 2015 recession, down and out. But that changed when his company won a bid on a maintenance project funded by this government that is refurbishing a 17-unit affordable housing project in Calgary-Currie. Over the past year he has hired 12 local workers to renovate and upgrade what is known as Killarney 1.

Three Fridays ago I visited Killarney 1 and heard many hopeful stories. One man used to walk by with his grocery cart collecting bottles until the crew asked him if he was looking for work. He was, Mr. Speaker, and he has since become a member of this hard-working team and has found housing and belonging. Another person was hired for this team just as his landlord was about to evict him, and yet another young man was hired whose struggles with mental health had forced him to quit university. He now owns his own apartment and has a good income.

The bonds forged between these workers and the residents of Killarney 1 were heartwarming. The construction crew not only chats with the residents, but they also have lunch together on the back patio when it is appropriately sunny. The construction manager told me that this has been his favourite project because it allowed him to provide good jobs for people who are too often forgotten.

For me, Mr. Speaker, it was an amazing example of how government decisions to invest in affordable housing, invest in job

creation and people make lives better, and we also know that the opposite is true. The opposition's desire to cut infrastructure spending would slow down business and prevent hiring, making lives worse for average Albertans.

I am so proud of our government, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to work hard to ensure that more stories like this one are possible for more people across this province.

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

Seniors' Mobile Blood Collection Service in St. Paul

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak to the obvious lack of respect shown by the NDP government to the seniors of our province. We've all heard how the Premier's office responded to the Sundre West Country Centre when they were threatened with closure due to the effects of the carbon tax. They were told: just hold a fundraiser. Otherwise, they would have had to increase fees of fixed-income seniors just to cover the costs of the carbon tax.

More recently I received a copy of correspondence from the east area laboratory manager for Alberta Health Services to the Sunnyside lodge residents in St. Paul regarding a change to mobile collection requisition dated May 8. Previously a lab tech from the nearby St. Therese health centre would come by once per week for scheduled blood work. Often as many as 20 residents would be lined up, and with help from the staff, this convenient, senior-friendly service was expedited.

But no more. Suggestions were made by this manager of numerous options for seniors to find adequate transportation for a small fee, and I'll quote from her letter. "If finding adequate transportation is an issue there are many options within St. Paul such as the Action Bus that is ran through the Town of St. Paul for a small fee, utilizing cabs and family members." So residents can bundle up and go sit in the emergency ward at the hospital, exposing themselves to the virus of the day. Oddly enough, this service is still available to patients in extended care in the facility next door, literally just metres away.

I wonder how many levels of management at AHS and how many meetings of the minds it took to come up with this cost-saving measure. I wonder if any thought was given at any time to eliminate a management position rather than cut this service to seniors, or is it just easier to hit the most vulnerable who don't have a voice?

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the minister of environment, who is not able to be here but who referenced this particular article by a gentleman named Dave Klepacki when she was speaking last Thursday, that Kenney Doesn't Get to Label Me a 'Special Interest,' I have the requisite five copies.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my member's statement I referenced a letter from Megan Boire, the east Alberta lab manager for Alberta Health Services, to the residents of the Sunnyside lodge, saying that their on-site blood collection will be cancelled.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office, pursuant to the Alberta Land Stewardship Act proposed amendments to the South Saskatchewan regional plan.

2:50

Orders of the Day

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

Bill 204

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

[Debate adjourned May 7: Dr. Turner speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying when this matter was last debated, the government takes this matter very seriously and has asked for expert analysis from the Law Reform Institute. That work has begun. I'm of the view that proceeding with this bill at this time rather than waiting for advice from the experts on a very complex bill would be premature. For that reason, I will be moving a reasoned amendment. It reads . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, let's just give an opportunity for the pages to pass the document around, and then we'll proceed.

Hon. member, proceed with the amendment.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. MLA Turner to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be not now read a second time because a review of adverse possession is currently underway by the Alberta Law Reform Institute, and any recommendations and advice coming from that review must be taken into account prior to the government developing legislation and policies to give effect to the abolition of adverse possession.

Members, I agree with the principle and motive behind this bill, but I believe that we have to get it right. Adverse possession is a complex matter that impacts not only the legislation included within Bill 204 but also potentially other provincial statutes. That is why the Alberta Law Reform Institute has been asked to review the matter. I understand that the review is under way and that stakeholder consultations will form part of that review. I believe it's appropriate that further action on this issue should await the receipt of this report.

For that reason, I urge all members to support my amendment.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the amendment will be identified as RA1.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me today. It's funny how much of a pattern you've seen in this Assembly over the last three years. It would be very funny if it wasn't for the fact that it has such serious consequences for people each and every time that the government continues their pattern when it comes to this.

So here we go. We have another amendment, another referral amendment from the government, sending a bill to committee. [interjections] Oh, sorry. A reasoned amendment. Thank you. I was coming back from talking with the Government House Leader. A reasoned amendment. My point would still stand. Sorry; I thought it was a referral.

We have a history of this government when they recognize that politically they can't vote against something but because of their ideology or because of the circumstances that they have they are incapable of or unwilling to support an opposition private member when it comes to a piece of legislation, where this government has repeatedly done this in this House. I mean, the earliest recollection I have is when they did it to the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on an important piece of legislation in regard to holding politicians accountable in our democracy.

What happens then is that the government over there looks and says: "Whoops. We can't vote no for this because our constituents will not accept that, so we'll do a procedural amendment. We'll send it off to a committee to die, and then we'll walk around and tell our constituents that this will actually, truly be debated." In that case, that's where it would go, and then it never happens again. Repeatedly now. This is even more appalling when it comes to Bill 204 because this has been through committee after committee after committee in which the result has been to say: vote for this.

Now, the constituents that I have that are being impacted by this, that are actually losing property or those types of things, they aren't going to accept that as an answer. I mean, the government, Mr. Speaker, should stand up and acknowledge that they don't want to vote for this because they disagree with it. That's fine. But to then just try to run and hide and kill the hon. member's bill without admitting why or even discussing why they want to do it is appalling. It's appalling.

Ms Hoffman: Why do you want to run and hide?

Mr. Nixon: I don't want to run and hide from this at all.

This is an important issue. We have had several constituents who have come and talked to me about this. Early in my elected life this was one of the first issues that came to my office. I do understand that in urban Alberta they may not hear it as much, though the examples used by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek are from urban Alberta.

You have a government who over and over and over brings forward legislation in this Assembly that they're not ready to legislate on, and when it's pointed out that they're not ready and the opposition says, "Hey, get this to committee and get this fixed," the government won't do it. They'll jam it through, come back in another session, and try to fix it. But then in the case of private member's business that is reasonable, that Albertans want – this government realizes that, and they won't vote and support it – they do the same thing, they bring forward a procedural amendment each and every time.

It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. It's ridiculous that this government keeps doing it, and it's time to call a spade a spade.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're dealing with amendment RA1. Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, to the amendment?

Mr. Gotfried: Yes.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a bit

disconcerting. I have to say to you that we actually as a caucus joked about whether we should maybe do our own referral to committee on this because it's been a ping-pong ball back and forth between this committee and the Ministry of Justice and various other organizations.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation has been addressed since 2003 by the ALRI. It was addressed in a bill, brought forward by Ken Allred, that was unanimously passed at second reading in 2012. It was discussed and the adverse possession component of it was supported in many ways by members of this government when Bill 204 came up most recently.

But I wanted to look through a little bit of chronology on this, Mr. Speaker. I'm referring to the body of recommendations, most specifically from the Alberta Property Rights Advocate and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, which is of course dominated by members of the government side, in support of the abolition of adverse possession that started in 2014. The Alberta Property Rights Advocate annual report recommendation 2014.03, submitted on June 22, 2015, is "that the law of adverse possession be abolished in Alberta."

In March of 2016, when that report was addressed by the Committee on Resource Stewardship, it was determined that this recommendation should be reviewed and addressed by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General based on these considerations. "The Committee recommends that the Legislature not act on recommendation 2014.03 at this time but instead refer the recommendation to the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General for review."

Mr. Speaker, from a minority report at that time expressed from that committee:

Despite it being clearly within the committee's mandate to recommend that the Legislature act to reassure Alberta landowners they are not vulnerable to this archaic law, the majority chose to abdicate its deliberative function and pass the matter on to the Minister of Justice to review at her leisure with no expression of support for the change.

At a subsequent meeting of the committee it was noted that Standing Order 52.09(1) requires the government to respond to a report of a Legislative Policy Committee, with certain exceptions, within 150 days from the date on which the committee reports to the Assembly. It is unclear whether the standing order was met at the appropriate time by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, but from what I've been able to determine from the committee reports, that was not met.

Mr. Speaker, fast-forward to July of 2016 and the Property Rights Advocate 2015 annual report, recommendation 2015.02.

It is recommended Alberta Justice and Solicitor General be asked . . .

And this is because of inaction.

. . . as the ministry administering the Property Rights Advocate Act, to develop a process to ensure recommendations made by the Property Rights Advocate Office are followed up on after they are endorsed by a Standing Committee of the Legislature, or where the Committee requests additional action, which they did.

When the Committee endorses, or rejects a recommendation, it may be desirable to have a mechanism that demonstrates what follow up was taken.

Without a clearly-defined process . . .

This is from the Property Rights Advocate.

. . . for follow up, the work of the Property Rights Advocate Office, the Committee and others [who work on it] may not bear fruit.

I don't think there's any fruit coming from this committee and from the Ministry of Justice at this time, and now we are trying to grow a new tree to try and bear the same fruit.

3:00

Further, in the 2016 Property Rights Advocate office annual report:

In addition, both recommendations contained in the 2015 Property Rights Advocate Annual Report were unanimously endorsed by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. Once these recommendations are fully implemented, the likelihood for government to identify and act upon ways to improve fairness and equity among property rights should be enhanced.

In addition, implementation should increase transparency and accountability to Albertans by their government regarding property rights.

Property rights: that's what we're talking about here, Mr. Speaker.

During its meeting on February 21, 2017, the Committee made a [further] recommendation with respect to the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta. While considering the issue, the Committee acknowledged that the law of adverse possession is archaic and has been abolished in other provincial jurisdictions except in Nova Scotia, which is currently in the process of abolishing this doctrine. The Committee therefore determined that adverse possession should be abolished in Alberta.

And we want to bounce it back to that same committee, Mr. Speaker?

Based on these considerations the Committee recommends that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta.

That sounds pretty clear to me.

July 21, 2017, would have marked 150 days from the date of that motion and that recommendation from the committee, and to date, we do not see evidence of a response to the committee nor any action to abolish adverse possession, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, subsequently I had the chance to meet with the ALRI, and they told me that they have not gotten to this yet, that it has been pushed to them by the ministry, and that it is in the queue, which means that they may or may not be able to get to it. Once they do get to it, it will take between 12 and 18 months. So we don't have a timeline of when they're going to address it, and we're told that it's going to take 12 to 18 months.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Madam Speaker, I had a constituent recently, who was in this House just last week, who lost almost 1,000 square feet of his property, valued in the tens of thousands of dollars, because of a fence misplaced for just over the 10-year limit; 11 years, I think, 11 and a half years. When he decided and went to his neighbour and said, "Neighbour, you know, why don't we put in a new fence? It's time. The fence is getting a bit run down. It's time to put in a new fence, and then we can kind of get this thing settled once and for all," well, guess what? The next thing he got was papers served to him for adverse possession because that land was going to be seized by his neighbour with no compensation. This is within today's law.

So there's a time to get rid of bad laws. We have section 69 of the Law of Property Act, which will protect people where something has been done inadvertently, where a house or something or a garage is in the wrong place. There are settlements, and there are ways for that to be done with compensation, Madam Speaker, not a legal seizure of land. A legal seizure of land. Can you believe it? When I talk to my constituents about it, they go:

“No, no, no. You have to be kidding. Squatters’ rights: I thought that was some sort of thing of the past that we talk about in sort of archaic terms.” Outdated and archaic terms, to use some of the terminology of the very committee that we’re trying to send this back to.

Madam Speaker, this is ridiculous, for us to send this back to a committee that’s treated this like a ping-pong ball. We’ve had to force some decisions on that committee, and they finally passed unanimously – unanimously – to recommend to this government that they abolish adverse possession, and now that ping-pong ball came back into this Legislature.

We gave you the opportunity here today. We’re giving you the opportunity to do what’s right for your constituents, your constituent that might lose their property with a legal – not illegal; legal – seizure of land with no compensation because a fence was in the wrong place for 10 years and a day. Does sound right to you? Now look me in the eye, and tell me that. Madam Speaker, have them look me in the eye. Have them go to their constituents and tell them: “Oh, by the way, it’s okay. I’m okay if we have this battle on the books for another 18 to 24 months” – or maybe it never gets addressed by this government – “that you can have your land seized.” They’ll look at you, and they’ll laugh and say: “You’re kidding me. That can’t be a law today.”

This is a chance to get rid of a bad law, Madam Speaker. You know what? There might be some other changes that we make to this law in the future, as we see, but there is section 69 to make sure that there is a way to adjust unintended buildings, unintended improvements, unintended location of buildings. There is a law in place to be able to adjust that.

This reasoned amendment, Madam Speaker, is not something that we should consider at this time. This reasoned amendment is a bit of a joke to me. In fact, we joked about it earlier today, that maybe we should do that, just to sort of say: wouldn’t this be crazy if this reasoned amendment were to pass, if this motion were to pass. And we said: no, that’s crazy; why would we want to do that, send it back to the very same committee? What for?

Dr. Turner: It’s not going to a committee.

Mr. Gotfried: Sorry. It’s a reasoned amendment. It’s being hoisted here.

You know what? The bottom line is that we’ve talked about this piece of legislation enough. We’ve promised Albertans. We’ve had the Property Rights Advocate tell us time after time after time. That’s the Property Rights Advocate, a specialist in property rights, Madam Speaker. A specialist in property rights has told this Legislature and that committee that they wanted to – and that committee agreed with that, and they said that they were going to do that. They recommended that it be done.

Is this because the government is embarrassed in not meeting that 150-day rule once, that 150-day guideline twice? Now we’re going into triple jeopardy on this, and we’re going to push it down the road at least another 12 to 18 months. And the ALRI: I’d love to hear if the ALRI has actually given us a date they’re going to start this. They only have five people there – five people – and they have other legislation they’re dealing with.

You are doing this reasoned amendment, are saying to Albertans that the seizure, illegal seizure of their land, the absolute disregard for their property rights, the disregard for our Torrens system, which – by the way, Madam Speaker, the Torrens system: actually, we guarantee. And I’ll use the term here, “we guarantee.” This reasoned amendment does not deserve . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow first.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Often when something comes before the House, in particular under private members’ business – but it happens on other topics as well – the government will do something that seems to be a little counterintuitive or, perhaps, even very intuitive. There’s a very clear, often transparent political motive behind what the government may want to do because perhaps they just don’t want to be caught out with the opposition having passed a particular bill or motion. Perhaps they don’t want to be seen to vote against something that really is in the best interests of Albertans or just sort of fits good, common sense, but for political reasons they don’t want to give the opposition a win.

But what I really have a hard time getting my head around on this topic is: what is the motivation of the government for not supporting the end of adverse possession? I can’t actually understand why we’re in this place. The only thing I can think about is that they somehow don’t want the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to get the credit for doing something that is so far overdue that Alberta is now the last province not only in the land but one of the last places in the entire Commonwealth to have this system in place. That’s all I can think about. If that is, in fact, the rationale from government, it’s about as petty as you could possibly get, and it’s profoundly disappointing if that is, in fact, the reason. Perhaps there’s some other reason, but I haven’t heard through the course of debate any logical, rational reason why this should not go ahead.

I’ve heard from the government: “Good idea. We think this is, you know, long overdue. It’s about time, and, yup, we’re looking at it.” Well, guess what? The Resource Stewardship Committee did look at it. I happened to be part of that. I happened to be part of the committee when it wrote its report, released in March 2017, which recommended that

the law of adverse possession is archaic and has been abolished in other provincial jurisdictions except Nova Scotia, which is currently in the process of abolishing this doctrine . . . the Committee [recommended] that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta legislation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It’s about as clear as you get, Mr. Speaker. That is a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, dominated by government members, that passed that recommendation, if I recall, unanimously. It’s the right recommendation.

The only reason, I can think, that this is not being supported by government is because somehow they want the credit for doing it themselves, I guess. I don’t know. It’s certainly not on the legislative agenda for this spring. The clock is ticking. Frankly, because this bill, as a private member’s bill, is on the Order Paper for this session of the Assembly, my understanding procedurally is that the government couldn’t even bring it forward in the fall, so we’re basically out of time if we want to deal with this under this Legislature unless we’re going to go into next spring and go deep into next spring without an election. This is your chance.

3:10

So what do they do? They send it to the Alberta Law Reform Institute, which, by the way, has addressed this question three times already. What information do you think you’re going to get from the Alberta Law Reform Institute that you don’t already have?

Nova Scotia is abolishing this. The United Kingdom: interestingly, my wife is British, and you hear these stories, in

London in particular, of squatters' rights. Someone comes in, lives in a building for a particular time, and claims it. It actually happened to friends of ours. They ended up walking into their brand new apartment in London – they just got posted there – and there's a notice on their door from the squatters who have taken over the building. They're a little shocked because they're Canadian, and they want to be polite and nice about things. But these people are in their house, so what do you do? They called the police. There was a process. It took a bit of time. It wasn't straightforward. There are still people operating and labouring under the misapprehension in the U.K. that there is such a thing, but it's been abolished since 2002. Even the root parliament, the root set of laws – the common-law principle, where this comes from many, many, many hundreds of years ago, has been abolished basically everywhere but here.

This is our chance to do it. It makes absolutely no sense. I honestly can't actually see – even from a political perspective, if I was just to flip it around and think about why the government might strategically want to kind of get one over on the opposition or not be seen to be outfoxed, I can't actually even understand what logical purpose it serves for the government to bring forward this amendment, to not simply stand up and say, "Hon. member, good bill; we like it," perhaps work with the member if there are certain amendments that you'd like to see, work with Parliamentary Counsel to make sure we get it right because, of course, this is complex legal territory. That would have been the right approach. I'm sure that if it's a question of timing, I think we could have moved it through the Assembly very quickly. We could have paused it as needed to make sure we get the technical aspects of this correct.

What I see from the member here is not some political trick to try to corner the government. I see an opportunity and an attempt to actually legitimately make change that is in accordance with the finding of a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly, of which there were all parties present. We spent an awfully long time on that particular topic and came up with some very good recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense to me, why this government seeks to not now read this bill a second time. It makes absolutely no sense why we're not simply abolishing the law of adverse possession. It causes real harm to the people of Alberta, and I really am absolutely baffled why this government is allowing that situation to persist.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a fine day in Alberta. It's quite interesting to be talking about the Alberta land statutes act when many Albertans are actually out on the land. An old rural, farmer adage: they talk about being out standing in their fields.

I'd like to share some thoughts, too, on this amendment coming forward from a backbench NDP MLA. It's kind of interesting that we would be talking about this because this has been referred to many times in the Legislature. If I could, Mr. Speaker, just to be perfectly clear: MLA Turner moves that the motion for second reading of Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and submitting the following:

Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be not now read a second time because a review of adverse possession is currently underway by the Alberta Law Reform Institute . . .

That's an important organization.

Any recommendations and advice coming from that review must be taken into account prior to the government developing

legislation and policy to give effect to the abolition of adverse possession.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if we don't make and change policies in this Chamber independently or at some point take our own initiative, I don't know when we would. It's time that there be some responsibility taken in this Chamber going forward. I can see that I'm enthralling the members in the backbench on the other side over there like another member from Calgary there, who takes great umbrage in the importance of the discussion here. It's important that we learn and understand, you know, about adverse possession. This is truly about the actual dirt when we talk about property rights.

It's important because in my career of travelling about the prairie provinces, I've seen false and incorrect survey installations go on across the prairies. Because of the way the survey is imparted upon the globe, there are various areas of the province that have what they call correction lines, where the survey is corrected. As a result of that and prior to the development of the modern GPS technology, there are many places where sometimes a survey is not necessarily accurate. Even in the situations that I have in our farming operation, when land surveyors come out to survey for oil field lease site development, sometimes they'll find where the stake that was driven by the surveyors of the 1880s isn't necessarily completely accurate based off the information that they have from their GPS survey.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm talking about is a legal process, in this case, where a person who is not a registered owner of land can acquire legal ownership of that parcel of land from the actual existing registered owner if the new person claiming ownership can prove continuous, open, and exclusive possession or occupation of the owner's land for a period of 10 years. If the new person trying to acquire legal ownership can satisfy a Court of Queen's Bench justice that the defined conditions have been met, then the court can issue a judgment that would allow a new certificate of title to be issued in the name of the new owner. The former owner would not be entitled to receive any compensation for the land that was lost to the new legal owner based off the court action.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, from my flying career, you know, at elevation above the ground of anywhere from 10,000 to 5,000 feet, sometimes these lands are easily discernible, and it's easy to see and to understand why there may have been misunderstandings. But the implications of this act are absolutely basically very simple.

If I could just go on with some more background, in 2014 the Property Rights Advocate recommended that adverse possession be abolished. Mr. Speaker, the Property Rights Advocate is an entity coming forth from government, and they receive and field lots of questions, lots of comments and regularly meet with all sorts of landowners. That's their job, to talk about property rights, not necessarily always about the physical attributes but sometimes the nonphysical attributes of property rights. They made this recommendation because, in their view, abolishing adverse possession would strengthen the integrity of the land registry system and the reliability of the land title records based off our Torrens system of land ownership. This 2014 report suggested reintroducing and passing the legislation.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate enough in 2003 and 2004 to travel to Brazil, and in that jurisdiction they don't use the Torrens land system. When you go and purchase land from an existing neighbour, they go to all the boundary neighbours of the land that you're talking about purchasing and get signed documents based off the opinions of the neighbouring landowner. From that, now they go out and put GPS co-ordinates based off where the boundaries are that are agreed upon by the neighbours of the land that's about to be transferred.

Mr. Speaker, this predecision, this preacknowledgement of what they perceive the boundaries to be based now on modern GPS locations is a predecessor to preventing any miscommunication of where the actual legal boundary lines are. In the Torrens system this land boundary system was perceived to be created in the 1880s.

In February 2016, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship reviewed the '14 report from the outgoing Property Rights Advocate, Mr. Lee Cutforth. The legacy Wildrose Party and PC members urged the government to support them in recommending to the Assembly that adverse possession be abolished. Instead, the NDP used their majority to refer the matter to the Department of Justice. We are not aware of this review ever being initiated by the Department of Justice. So I ask again: when is this Chamber going to take some intestinal fortitude, I would call it, and move forward with legislation?

In February 2017 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship again revisited recommendations from the Property Rights Advocate. At this time the committee was also urged by legacy Wildrose and Progressive Conservative members to recommend that the government should abolish adverse possession. Again, while considering the issue, the committee acknowledged, Mr. Speaker, that

the law of adverse possession is archaic and has been abolished in other provincial jurisdictions except in Nova Scotia, which is currently in the process of abolishing this doctrine. The Committee therefore determined that adverse possession should be abolished in Alberta.

A committee of our own Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Based on these considerations the Committee recommends that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta legislation.

The motion was unanimously passed in a committee of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. The committee recommended that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession and all statutory references supporting it.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the NDP MLA for West Yellowhead published a column attacking UCP members of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for voting against a motion he had put forward relating to the Alberta Property Rights Advocate, but, as usual, sometimes the government isn't giving the full story. The motion introduced by the member and pushed through by the committee's NDP majority proposed to have an internal government committee assess options to bring fairness and equity to the property rights dispute settlement process. On the surface this may look reasonable, but a closer look reveals several fundamental problems. This side took issue with the idea that these discussions should be internal to government and take place behind closed doors with minimal or any input from the public.

Mr. Speaker, this government has an established track record of failing to adequately consult with Albertans before implementing policies that directly affect them. Albertans are growing tired of being told . . . [Mr. Strankman's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. I was surprised to learn that in 2018 our laws still state that someone can take over ownership of someone else's land simply by having squatted on that land for 10 years. You never think that when you have a large piece of land

passed down from generation to generation, a family legacy, someone would one day claim ownership to that land because a fence was in the wrong place. That just doesn't seem right.

I commend my colleague for bringing forward this bill that prevents individuals from losing land they have the rightful claim to. It is an archaic law. We need to protect the rights of property owners in Alberta. Most other provinces have made this change already as it is sensible, and it alleviates unnecessary concerns for property owners. For example, Mr. Speaker, did you know that the owner of a large farm under the current legislation would need to inspect the bounds of his property frequently to ensure that no one else lays a claim on that land? This could pose challenges when it comes to examining every inch of fence that was built to make certain that he does not risk forfeiting any of his rightful property.

It is evident how adverse possession, more commonly known as squatters' rights, is problematic in a rural setting, but it is equally troublesome in an urban city. It is all too frequent that we must rebuild our fences every few years, whether due to erosion, rotting wood, rust, or even a bad storm that knocks over a tree. Either way fences need to come down, but then the new problem arises. When working with your neighbour to put up a new fence, if you deviate from the census line by even a few inches, that property transfers ownership after 10 years and one day.

Mr. Speaker, I know that across the way we have a subject matter expert in this field. He sold real estate, and I hope the Member for Edmonton-McClung can speak to this because, certainly, these are very real issues that are happening here in Edmonton.

I might say that about six years ago I bought a house here in Edmonton, Mr. Speaker, to renovate and stuff. You know what? When I was getting it surveyed, they told me that the fence lines were completely off. They said that this is epidemic throughout the entire city of Edmonton. You see, sir, they didn't have the same technologies that we do today. You know, they used a little bit more in the way of old-school measuring back even 50 years ago, 40 years ago. As a result, there are a lot of properties even within Edmonton that do not have the proper property lines on them. And it was substantial, sir. The neighbours actually had a few feet either way from the property that I had purchased. Everyone was good and understanding with: should we decide to move the fence? But I don't think people are aware that they could basically take that land and just make it theirs. Fortunately, most people, I like to think, do have some sort of morals about them that are of the better qualities.

I think we do owe property owners who have invested their hard-earned money into this province the peace of mind that they will not lose their land without fair compensation. We do not simply play finders keepers with privately owned land. It seems completely counterintuitive that we can allow ownership to change hands, for property that was legally purchased, to someone that has squatted on the land for a basic, certain amount of time as this flies in the face of basic property rights and the law itself. To follow the law to the letter, have legal claim to land, and then through a loophole lose possession of that land sends a message that the legal system and the government will not protect your rights.

Mr. Speaker, seeing this bill brought forth by my colleague, I'm very optimistic. I hope that this time around we will see real change. Back in 2012 former member Ken Allred's private member's bill sought to abolish adverse possession. Unfortunately, although the bill passed second reading, the bill died on the Order Paper as Mr. Allred did not seek re-election.

In 2014 the Property Rights Advocate recommended the abolishment of adverse possession. This recommendation was

made because, in their view, abolishing adverse possession would strengthen the integrity of the land registry system and the reliability of the land title record. The 2014 Alberta Property Rights Advocate annual report recommendation 2014.03 was submitted on June 22, 2015. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the report suggested reintroducing and passing Mr. Allred's proposed legislation.

In February of 2016 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship reviewed the 2014 reports from Lee Cutforth, the outgoing Property Rights Advocate. The legacy Wildrose Party and PC members urged government support in recommending to the Assembly that adverse possession be abolished. Instead, as we're quite used to in this place, this government used their majority to refer the matter to the Department of Justice, and we are still not aware of a review even being initiated on this matter by the Department of Justice.

3:30

The minority report expressed:

Despite it being clearly within the committee's mandate to recommend that the Legislature act to reassure Alberta landowners they are not vulnerable to this archaic law, the majority chose to abdicate its deliberative function and pass the matter on to the Minister of Justice to review at her leisure with no expression of support for the change.

That is shameful, Mr. Speaker, that we still have not heard a word on this important matter being reviewed, supposedly, by the minister.

It is noted that at a subsequent meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship it was reaffirmed that under Standing Order 52.09(1) the government is required to respond to a report of the legislative policy committee, with certain exceptions, within 150 days from the date on which the committee reports to the Assembly. Yet it is still unclear if the standing order was met within the appropriate time by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General.

In February 2017 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship once again revisited the idea of abolition of adverse possession from the recommendations of the Property Rights Advocate. From both the Wildrose and PC sides members unanimously agreed and passed a motion that would recommend that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession. However, as the government has been aware of this issue since taking office, we continue encouraging action from this government much to our frustration. Even their own members tried to stir some action on this file over a year ago to seemingly no end. As such, it is now time that we do take action and abolish adverse possession.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this notice of amendment to basically scrap this proposal by the good Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is disappointing. You know, I expect more out of the good doctor from across the way. I have no doubt that a gun was held to his head and that he had to put this one out there, but it is disappointing. I guess the point is that we do have the opportunity to fix this law and to correct it.

Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I know there are people on the government side that totally plan on squatting somewhere, taking over some land one day. That's the NDP way, right?

Mr. Gotfried: Squatters' rights.

Mr. Yao: Ah, yes. Squatters' rights.

I guess that in the end we do have to be careful because we have legislation. We have rules that govern property and land, and it is a huge part of our economy. We cannot undermine an aspect of our economy with something like squatters' rights. It will either

encourage or discourage confidence in our system, depending on the rules that get passed through this House.

I would implore all members on both sides of this House to truly approve this Bill 204.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. The statements have been made pretty cogently, in my view.

I've been dealing with this issue for at least five years, and it was going on before I arrived or paid attention to the issue. Bill 204, the Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, proposed the repeal of section 74 in the Land Titles Act, which allowed an individual to obtain title and ownership through adverse possession, often referred to as squatters' rights. That's been back and forth between here and committee. We've had input from many organizations across the province, including the municipalities, law institutes, legal counsel, the committee itself. Those who have been adversely affected already in the province have addressed the issue.

It may be a reasoned amendment, but it doesn't seem like a reasonable one to many of us. I mean, this is such a basic concept that most of the western world has shifted away from it. Our own review of it called for this change, so let's get on with it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i) provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Be not read right now." Well, it is time for us right now to all do the right thing for everyday, hard-working Albertans, many of whom are lucky enough to have those mortgage-paying jobs we all seem to talk about in this House.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Member for Calgary-Currie that he hadn't yet heard from any of his constituents on this issue and that it needed more study to avoid unintended consequences, but today this law has specific, intended consequences, namely the potential, each and every day, of legal seizure of your constituents' land or a portion thereof without compensation. I ask that member: do you truly think we need to send this back to the ALRI after years of expert legislative recommendations, including a unanimous recommendation from a committee chaired by one of your hon. members, on which you personally sit, which said that "the law of adverse possession is archaic" and then unanimously recommended that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession? Do you want to vote against that, members? Do you want to vote to send it somewhere where it doesn't need to be sent and not get it done today? When will this government do so after having similar recommendations in their hands since the spring of 2016? Now is the time.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung waxed prophetically about indefeasibility, yet the very application of adverse possession, in fact, makes a mockery of that concept. Property rights and government-administered title registration, indeed. I note that on Service Alberta's own website it clearly states that "the Government guarantees the accuracy of the title." So why would members opposite not respect their own government's guarantee to Albertans? Is your word and your guarantee of such little consequence? Now is the time, Mr. Speaker, to live up to that guarantee.

The now Minister of Transportation has said in previous debate in this House, "I find it ironic in a way that it's the New Democrat opposition that is standing up and has stood up from the beginning for the rights of property owners in this province." Mr. Speaker,

voting down this bill will be a clear sign to Albertans that the members opposite do not in fact stand up for the property rights of all Albertans. Irrespective of their political affiliation we have a duty to Albertans. Shameful, empty rhetoric. Let's put this quite simply.

I have a classic example. This is not a partisan issue. I have a constituent who you've met in this House. He was a guest in this House just last week who lost a portion of his land, a classic and recent example of bad law in action in my own constituency, the recent case of Moore versus McIndoe. A suburban lot, a misplaced fence, 11-plus years of dutifully paying taxes, and then out of the blue a legal claim of adverse possession resulting in the loss of close to a thousand square feet of his lot, tens of thousands of dollars in lost value on land that may still hold a mortgage, Mr. Speaker. Tens of thousands spent to fight it on principle, and land seized legally by a possessing neighbour because of this bad law.

Mr. Speaker, possession is 10-tenths of the law in this province right now, and squatters' rights rule the day after 10 years and a day. Adverse possession is a time bomb of legal seizure of land for all Albertans. This is a quote from Mr. McIndoe, my resident, my constituent, who motivated me to bring this private member's bill. This is not a partisan issue. This is for everyone in this House. He brought that forward to me, and that is his quote: this is a time bomb for every Albertan who has lived in their house 10 years plus a day and may have a fence in the wrong location. Property rights injustice, indeed. Let this be a reminder that your constituent might be the next to be surprised by such a punitive, unfair, legal seizure of their land.

If you want that to be a possibility, vote yes to this amendment and you will be doing a disservice to your constituents. If you believe in doing the right, nonpartisan, constituent focusing and protecting the legal, registered, government-guaranteed property rights of all Albertans, vote no for this amendment and abolish adverse possession now here today. Prove that you truly stand up for what is right and the expectations of property rights and ownership protection shared by virtually every Albertan against this outdated, archaic law. Mr. Speaker, let's live up to our responsibility to Albertans, accept overwhelming expert legislative opinion, and get this done once and for all for hard-working Albertans. Let's not make this, my private member's bill, solely motivated by one of my constituents, Mr. Jim McIndoe, who has given his personal phone number to several members on the opposite side to share his story with them. Nobody has taken him up on that opportunity.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, the same Albertans that this government purports to be making life better for and who've worked and struggled so that they personally and their families may have a humble place that they believe they rightly own to call home: let's make sure that that home remains theirs and is not seized through the misapplication of a bad law. Vote no to this reasoned amendment, and vote yes to Bill 204.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:41 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Payne
Carson	Jabbour	Phillips
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Feehan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sucha
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Goehring	McLean	Turner
Gray	Miller	Woollard

Against the motion:

Clark	Gotfried	Smith
Cooper	Hanson	Strankman
Cyr	Loewen	Swann
Gill	Nixon	Yao

Totals:	For – 42	Against – 12
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[Motion on amendment RA1 carried]

The Speaker: Hon. members, as you will no doubt know, with a reasoned amendment, debate on the bill will end, and the bill would disappear from the Order Paper.

4:00

Bill 205 Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent of the House to defer second reading of Bill 205 until the first available Monday of the 2018 fall sitting.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Bill 206 Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to move second reading of Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a disturbing rise in organized hate groups around the world, and unfortunately this is also true right here in Alberta. Why do we know this? They've become emboldened; they've become visible. I'm not going to speculate on the reasons for this brazenness. I have my suspicions, but I'll leave that to the experts. The fact is that hate groups appear to feel that it's a good time to rise, that it's a good time to crawl from the dark corners of the Internet and publicly share their hate with other Albertans. Albertans should be concerned and appalled.

It is the brazenness of these groups in Alberta that was the impetus for me bringing Bill 206 forward. Seeing groups such as the Worldwide Coalition Against Islam openly promote their message on the steps of Calgary city hall did something to me. It made me concerned. More than concerned, Mr. Speaker, I was appalled and disgusted that the past 50 years of progress on inclusion was disappearing or, at the very least, that it was being

inclusion was disappearing or, at the very least, that it was being challenged. What I said to myself was that there must be something that can be done to, in some way, stifle the potential upswing of these hate groups trying to gain traction and influence a new generation to join these hate-filled organizations, which brought me to tabling Bill 206 in looking for some way to bring forward legislation to limit the ability of hate groups to grow.

I discovered that becoming a registered society in Alberta is a fairly simple process and, most alarmingly, that the Ku Klux Klan, the KKK, Mr. Speaker, was officially a society in Alberta until 2003. Much to my amazement, the postal code of the KKK that was attached to the application was actually in my riding of Calgary-Klein. Very concerning.

As such, the opportunity was presented. The ability of hate groups to be a legitimate society or organization in Alberta must be stopped, and this is what this bill will achieve. Mr. Speaker, Bill 206 amends the Societies Act by adding the term “lawful purpose” in section 1. That is the most important part of this legislation as it gives the registrar the ability to consider the purpose of an applicant to become a society from a perspective that considers that its intentions are for a lawful purpose. While this seems obvious, I have already noted that the KKK was a society until 2003, and without passing this legislation, there is nothing to stop this infamous hate group from reregistering as a society in Alberta. This legislation is not complicated. In fact, it’s common-sense legislation that blocks hate groups from becoming legitimized as a society in Alberta.

The second primary change in Bill 206 is that it puts the onus on the director of the society that the group applying for status has a lawful purpose and to ensure that this is not only valid at the time of application but that this declaration is carried out indefinitely.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a very important and positive consequence of the changes being proposed in Bill 206 is the fact that without being able to become a legitimate society, hate groups will not be able to accumulate wealth as a society. Societies are able to own and inherit property, and much like any other organization, it is money that enables a registered society to sustain itself and to grow. Isn’t it great that this legislation will stand in the way of both legitimizing and development of these hate groups? I think so.

British Columbia adopted this language in its Societies Act in 2015 and did so for the same reasons for which I bring this forward.

I spoke with the Alberta Muslim Public Affairs Council and the Calgary Jewish Federation, who endorsed this bill and applaud not only the symbolism of it but the practical step it takes to not permit hate groups to have official status. I also spoke with those who work to combat hate groups and have an intimate understanding of the inner workings of these groups, including retired RCMP officer Terry Wilson and Cam Stewart of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, who were also closely monitoring hate groups in Alberta. Mr. Wilson, who specialized in hate groups and is very familiar with the B.C. legislation, sees Bill 206 as a positive step forward in confronting hate groups. For Mr. Wilson, the biggest thing is the fact that this legislation limits the ability of these groups to accumulate wealth, and I couldn’t agree more.

I’ve had a lot of questions from media and other interested parties around how this legislation will be carried out; that is: are there currently organizations that promote hate who have society status in Alberta? Well, the answer to that is that we actually don’t know at this point, and there’s no intention to go through the 50,000 registered societies in Alberta to attempt to uncover groups whose sole purpose is hate. But Bill 206 will allow the registrar to use the criterion of lawful purpose when reviewing the yearly financials of current societies and to apply this to new applicants and those who may try to revive their society status such as the KKK.

Again, Mr. Speaker, without this legislation there is nothing to stop the KKK from renewing its status as a society in Alberta, and there’s nothing to stop the emboldened hate groups that we’ve seen come onto the scene recently. On the advice of Mr. Wilson and something that I understand was done in B.C. in concurrence with the legislation, Alberta’s registrars will be encouraged to have a relationship with the province’s hate crime units to have an understanding of how hate groups are operating, under what names they’re operating, and to keep apprised of the trends in this area to allow them to carry out this legislation in the most effective way possible.

Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to dwell on the past and wonder why this simple piece of legislation wasn’t enacted years ago. In fact, it is my understanding that the Premier’s father and former leader of the Alberta New Democrats, Grant Notley, attempted to make similar changes to the Societies Act during his time in the Assembly here, and he also cited the fact that the KKK was granted society status. I’m not going to lament the past. I just want to move forward with this government’s goal to make life better for all Albertans and to continue to move forward towards a more inclusive, kinder society.

I do, however, Mr. Speaker, want to make a comment outside of this legislation, a comment that is nonetheless germane to the topic of hate and hate groups overall, and that is that we have individuals and groups right here in Alberta who may not be directly related to hate groups but do, however, foment hate in our society, like the opposition’s close friends and allies at the Rebel media. We need to stand up to these organizations and let them know that it’s not okay to stir the toxins in the well.

To recap, Mr. Speaker, there are really two main reasons for introducing this legislation. First, by not permitting hate groups to become societies, we as a government and as a greater society are not giving hate groups legitimacy, we will not acknowledge them as an entity under the law, and we are making a statement that their ideas are not welcome. Secondly, it puts the onus on directors of societies to ensure that a society does have a lawful purpose and that it remains that way. Without having society status, it will not allow hate groups to accumulate wealth, the wealth that allows them to thrive and grow.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I ask that everyone in this Assembly support this bill and, in doing so, help keep Alberta the inclusive society that we all want it to be now and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

4:10

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 206, and I’d like to thank my colleague from Calgary-Klein for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. I think it is an issue that is of paramount importance here in our province, and that is to stop and speak against the promotion of hatred and any form of bigotry through any means and through any avenue. Any form of hatred, bigotry is completely and totally unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, it is an important issue that we can all address together. We have an opportunity in this House to either address it together from both sides of the House or to divide the House as well. I think it’s important that we do all that we can to ensure that on such an important piece of legislation we don’t play politics but that we put the interests of Alberta ahead of any personal interests, and the interest of ensuring that hatred and bigotry are not accepted in our province of Alberta: I think it’s something that we need to do together.

Throughout history we have seen all sorts of devastation and destruction at the hands of hatred. Literally tens of thousands of people have lost their lives, there has been untold suffering, and entire generations have been wiped out under what is an absolutely disgusting practice, and that is the form of hate. There is no place in our society for this kind of behaviour, yet it's unfortunate that we see groups aimed directly at promoting hate against one particular group or another cropping up all across North America.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have the absolute pleasure right now, myself and some of my colleagues, of reading a book called *Why Young Men*. It's written by a Canadian author. His name is Jamil Jivani. He speaks very specifically about the politics of division, about identity politics, about hatred, and about the radicalization of young men not just around the world but also right here in Canada. I think that we would all be well served to read such a book to have an understanding of what's happening in our society and what's happening to allow predominantly young men to find comfort and safe haven in digital and online communities and other spaces for these sorts of ideological positions and radicalization of individuals that suffer from a lack of community, that suffer from a lack of respect. Oftentimes they turn to communities where they feel those things that are unfortunately based in hate, that are based in a lack of respect for society and in bigotry.

I think that there is so much work that can be done, and while certainly this particular piece of legislation doesn't solve all of those problems, I think it does send an important signal about what we value here in our province of Alberta. As the member opposite stated, potentially societies that are based on hate or those directors who have committed hate crimes or hate speech would not be able to profit under the new legislation, and I think that we as a province would be well served.

We in Alberta are not immune to this sort of hatred. I think that, as the author that I previously mentioned has rightly pointed out, all across the country there are the sort of groups that promote this hatred, and we need to do what we can. I believe that that's what the intention of the Member for Calgary-Klein was. It was founded in that desire to do something against this terrible, terrible situation. We have seen and, as mentioned in a recent audit from B'nai Brith Canada, we found that anti-Semitic crimes are on the increase in Alberta, and that is disturbing.

Mr. Speaker, you'll know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed has spent significant periods of time in his career fighting against the forces of hatred right here in Canada as well as abroad. The Member for Calgary-Klein is absolutely right that we each have a personal responsibility to do everything we can to stomp out the flames of racism, bigotry, and hatred. That is exactly much of the work that the Leader of the Official Opposition has done over his time in public life. You'll know, Mr. Speaker, that as the minister of citizenship, immigration, and multiculturalism he defunded many of the so-called human rights organizations that were using public grant money to promote the type of hatred that the Member for Calgary-Klein is trying to prevent with respect to the Societies Act here in the province of Alberta. The Leader of the Official Opposition worked tirelessly to reach out to ethnically diverse communities in our province and across the country to help to promote a vision of unity, of understanding, and of respect and dignity, that is so important when it comes to preventing the radicalization and the promotion of hate inside our province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we agree that any group that is found to be promoting genocide or inciting hate of any nature should certainly not be permitted to register as a society here in the province of Alberta. I think about the world that I would like my children to grow up in, a society that's based on kindness, that's based on equal opportunity for each individual, a society where the

likes of some of the radical folks that the member opposite has mentioned are not welcomed in any way, shape, or form, be it here in the present or in any form of digital or online community. As we saw just so recently on the streets of Toronto, in the absolute darkest places on the Internet individuals are celebrated for promoting such hate, and if those individuals are benefiting in any way, shape, or form from being a society here in the province of Alberta, we should not tolerate that any longer or in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the role of all of us here is to ensure that we have legislation that is absolutely the most sound. I have some small reservations about one particular section in the piece of legislation, and I hope that we can work collaboratively to ensure a piece of legislation that is the strongest, that is the absolute best piece of legislation for all of Albertans. I hope that we can have a number of questions answered around the practical application of section 3(1)(b), where the word used is "could." It certainly leaves something to interpretation, so I have some small reservations around that. That's not to say that we shouldn't support this piece of legislation. I look forward to voting in favour of Bill 206 at second reading as we proceed forward together.

My colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake will outline some of these concerns in greater detail, but I want to reiterate that I hope that we can work productively with the government side of the House and all members, and in particular the Member for Calgary-Klein, to address these concerns, to ensure that the legislation is as strong as possible and that as an Assembly as a whole, over the next year that we have left together, we can have frank and real conversations about how we address this issue of hatred on a wider scale. One thing that we always need to ask ourselves as legislators is: what problem are we trying to solve? It's an important question that we ask. While this piece of legislation solves one piece of this larger problem, it is certainly not the entire solution.

I think that as legislators and as Albertans we have a duty and a responsibility to speak up against hatred and bigotry and do all that we can to ensure that this sort of behaviour is not tolerated or respected or celebrated in Alberta in any way, shape, or form. I look forward to supporting the legislation. I look forward to working collaboratively to find solutions so that we can get the best piece of legislation past third reading as well.

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

4:20

Mr. Sucha: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, one thing that I always look forward to is a future in which, to be frank, we don't talk about a lot of social issues in this House, where hate groups are not part of the narrative, where we don't talk about the challenges we deal with, transphobia or homophobia. There are some days where I think we're very close, and then there are some days where we see things on social media or the Internet that seem like we're rolling back.

If I can extend a thank you to the Member for Calgary-Klein for bringing forth this bill. I know it's done sincerely. I know he's done a lot of work behind the scenes, that he doesn't do it to seek accolades but he does it because it's the right thing to do and it's something he's passionate about. So as I open up, I do want to say thank you. You know, I do look forward to the day where we really judge people on the merits of their character and the merits of the job that they do when they're seeking employment. While we're not there just yet, I would love to see the day in my lifetime where we do get to that.

When I door-knock in Calgary-Shaw, I hear from many of my constituents who express concerns about fringe groups who really try to leverage things like social media and the Internet to get out

and spread populist, extremist views, in many cases of a racist nature. We see many groups, as the member alluded to, some like Rebel media, that really pick up on these racist undertones. It's very unfortunate, so anything that we can do to try to combat the legitimacy of this is very important for us to do.

You know what? At the end of the day, we will always stand up in this House, and we will always defend free speech. Our party will always defend it. Even though we don't like the narratives that we have, it is important to recognize that we are not stopping free speech. We are only using this to take away the ability to register as a society. To refresh members, societies may own property and may also sign contracts under the name of societies. They also may accumulate debt without the debt being put under an individual's name. This also provides them with a bit more formality. At the end of the day, anything that we can do to pull back that formality for groups of a racist nature is important.

You know, being a born-and-raised Albertan and growing up in northeast Calgary, I always felt blessed to be living in that area, in that part of Calgary, because it was very diverse. I learned a tremendous amount, and my family and my parents saw it as a benefit for us, a net benefit. At the end of the day, we could learn about our country, we could learn about our cultures, and we could learn about our world. We always leveraged that as a huge net benefit for our community.

Unfortunately, in the '90s there was an uptick of racist undertones that happened, and I would see that in my community. Sometimes it was from other – you know, we weren't leveraging the Internet, but we were leveraging editorials and other fringe ways for this, whether it was slipping in leaflets or whatever the case may be. We saw that coming from populist groups like the Heritage Front at the time. Groups like this would use their status to try to influence the political narrative and to really influence what was happening within policies that were being made.

I recall in 1992 the Heritage Front members even attempted to influence the Reform Party, and members were joining that party. You know, credit to the leadership base of the Reform Party at the time: they did expel these members when they caught wind of what they were trying to do. I do have some respect for that. When I door-knock in my community, one of the things that I've heard that is a huge appeal of the NDP to people is that we stand up for building strong, united communities. The last door that I knocked on on Saturday, that was what I heard from them: I've always been a strong supporter of the NDP because they build strong communities.

So it concerns me when I'm in my constituency that some extremist views might be influencing people who are represented in my community. Just eight days ago we saw Motion 30 come out, and unfortunately that was sponsored by members of the UCP Calgary-Shaw EDA. Essentially, going against the views of the ATA, it would out gay kids within schools. I want to give some credit where credit is due, to the Member for Calgary-Hays, because he spoke up against that motion, and he did say that this is about outing gay kids, and he really tried to push against it. Unfortunately, it did pass the convention.

I'm hopeful that this is not influenced by any extremist groups. To be honest, when I received the few comments against Bill 24, that this Motion 30 would look to repeal, they cited so-called pseudo-news articles. These ones were coming from Rebel media, and this is a group that has been known to spread hateful comments.

At the end of the day – I will move on my next point – I think it's very clear to the people of Calgary-Shaw who's going to stand up for LGBTQ rights in that area because we've already seen the motions that have come forward from the EDA in that constituency. But you know what? The one thing that the member brought forth, that I would like to put as an undertone, moving on to my next topic, is

that it's hard for us to really know if fringe groups are really trying to do this, if they've gone into societies, because there are so many of them.

To put some safeguards in place that'll prevent them from spreading hate as a society will allow us to pull these groups back. We've really started seeing them coming out in the communities, whether it's on the steps of city hall or even in my constituency. I know that some of them have set up in Fish Creek park a few times to spread their racist views. These groups are really trying to manipulate facts to spread a false narrative and false truths that are existing. Whether they use this to try to influence immigration policies or whether they try to use this to influence overall general policies or even our curriculum, it can be very disconcerting because it spreads false fears, and it spreads falsehoods.

With that being said, I look forward to this bill moving through the House and hearing comments from all members. I want to thank the member for bringing forth this bill because I know that it comes from the right place, and it comes from very strong views. I know that he really wants to make his community the best one possible, just as all members of this House do.

Thank you very much.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 206, Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. It's surprising that we have to address this in such a formal way, but I'm pleased also to see this formalized in a bill, recognizing that we've come a long way in Alberta. It's so subtle at times and so dramatic at other times that our society and culture are shifting to recognize universal rights. Over the decades, centuries it's taken this kind of attention to address everything from women and their rights, to indigenous people, to gender issues, such as we've heard today, and all manner of religious intolerance around the world.

I think we're united here, very clearly, in wanting to address the issue, to prevent this kind of activity in society, and to ensure that we don't have to deal with problems in the streets, in the courts, in other respects when we could be dealing with them very proactively by identifying these kinds of activities that discriminate and promote hate and ultimately violence.

I guess one would have to look, indeed, at improving some of the checks and balances on our social media, that is digital media, but also on our public media, because in some ways it's creeping in in various places there. Whether or not these individuals or organizations are registering; that's a question I would have for the bill promoter, to what extent this adds to and supplements the other ways in which we can identify and intervene on some of these intolerant and hateful messages and images that are coming across, that go beyond the federal act and violate the hate speech laws that we currently have in place in Canada.

It should be very easy to move this forward. How these various acts and messages are determined to be unacceptable is a matter for those involved in the legislation federally. But it also places a burden now on our Service Alberta ministry to be more vigilant, to identify even in current societal registrations whether there's been due diligence, and to look backwards at some of the activities of some of the organizations that have been in place. Of the thousands of societies in Alberta, there may be indeed some examples that need to be confronted under this new bill.

4:30

I won't prolong the discussion, recognizing that we have many things to deal with, but I think this would unite us in support for a

very vigorous, very public recognition that this kind of speech or activity within an association or society needs to be confronted as soon as it's identified and proactively snuffed out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. Before I even get started here, I wanted to state my condemnation of any individual or group that spreads hate in our society. It is unacceptable to give any legitimacy to hate groups in our society. The United Conservative Party stands resolutely against the promotion of hate and bigotry.

I thank the member for his action to raise this issue through this bill, and I wholeheartedly agree with the sentiment and the goal to try to eliminate the horrendous occurrences of inciting hatred and the support for genocide that we, sadly, see from time to time. Under this legislation a society may only be formed for a lawful purpose, specifically targeting those who promote or advocate genocide and those who would speak publicly to incite hatred. Again, this is a well-intentioned proposal which acknowledges, correctly, that government should not be inadvertently legitimizing hate groups through the Societies Act.

I also want to be clear that this is not a partisan issue. We all stand united against hatred and bigotry, and we all support action to combat it when and where it occurs.

I also would like to take a moment to thank our Alberta law enforcement officers and prosecutors, who work diligently to ensure that the perpetrators of hate crimes are brought to justice and feel the full force of the law. We need to ensure that law enforcement professionals and legal professionals have every resource at their disposal to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. With the recent increase in crime, we've been seeing a strain on our justice system. We need to do all we can to ensure that those who are engaged in criminal activity like advocating for genocide and the incitement of hatred are investigated, arrested, charged, and prosecuted, period. As such, I certainly hope that the members across the aisle will support real, concrete action to deal with the increased strain on our justice system, that our caucus has been raising as an issue for quite some time now.

We'd like to make sure that no Albertans live in fear of encountering these types of crimes in our society. Alberta has long been a welcoming place for peoples of all races, religions, backgrounds, and no one should ever feel targeted for these reasons. I want to make it absolutely clear to any Albertan that has ever experienced any form of hatred targeted towards them: the United Conservative Party stands with you. We will be your voice against hatred and bigotry. We will work with you to combat hatred in our province. That is why I can say that I support the principle of this legislation without hesitation.

That said, I do have some questions surrounding the potential administration. Thus, I would like to take an opportunity to seek clarity from the proponent on parts of this bill and its potential application. Particularly in section 3(1)(b), I am hoping to gain some insight on the use of the word "could." We want to have clarity on what will be and will not be included there. The current wording seems to make this subjective and opens up a large grey area. Surely, the member would agree that when it comes to the serious matter of promoting genocide and inciting hatred, we want the law to be absolutely clear and unequivocally something that we can move forward with. This may be an area where we can offer up a friendly amendment to strengthen the legislation in a crosspartisan

fashion. Perhaps some of our colleagues should share their thoughts. I look forward to the discussion on this matter.

I would also like to inquire with the member if he has had the opportunity to discuss with any legal experts the implication of extensive Canadian jurisprudence on the matter of hate speech laws and any impact it might have on potential legislation like this. I want to make sure that when we pass legislation, we stay within the bounds set out on the topic of law in question to ensure that it is capable of standing up to a potential legal challenge, again, something that has been quite common with legislation dealing with the topic of hate speech in the past. We owe it to the victims of hate and bigotry to make sure that we get the protections like this right the first time. As I said, I would appreciate any insights on this from the member proposing this bill.

I think that we can take the good intention of the member, the noble goal to combat and eliminate hatred and bigotry in our province, and iron out any minor wrinkles, that together we can pass a law that will protect Albertans and show that we will work together to take action on this serious issue, specifically when it comes to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that we can do exactly that. I hope that we can work together to combat hate and bigotry. I hope that through discussion and debate we can get clarity and make improvements on this bill before us, and I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say on this topic.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this bill. It's about time, and I'm thrilled that this is going to be happening.

For many of you, I know that you've been part of boards for nonprofits that are registered societies. I know that I've worked for a number of registered societies over the years, and it's a lot of work, actually, to submit the objectives of your societies, your annual returns, your audits, all of the things, and I think that most of us take it very, very seriously as we register, outlining the importance of the work that we do and the benefit that it has to our community. That's really key about nonprofits, the benefit. The fact that this member has brought forward something that will address this very issue is fantastic. It's about time. I know that great nonprofits all around Alberta are standing up and applauding this, so thank you for that.

I've heard the members from across the way a few times now highlight the fact that they don't think that this is a partisan issue. I agree with them. I don't think that this is a partisan issue at all. I think it's a human issue, absolutely, but how you govern yourself is certainly a partisan issue. I know that I can speak for the people on this side that we don't make a habit of going on hate-filled, lie-filled sites like Rebel to be interviewed or to be supported and then turn around and come into this place and say: yay; we're going to do something to clamp down on these hate groups.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Let me remind you a little bit about the hate that that particular organization spews, and let's be honest with ourselves. I think we're in denial a little bit in Alberta and Canada that this isn't a big problem here. It's not as big of a problem as it is south of the border, but it's getting worse. It's getting worse all the time, and it's getting worse for a reason. When you have hate-spewing sites like Rebel doing things, hiring people that will use their platform to talk about things that they hate about Jews or to go stand and record the tragic events at Charlottesville – and that's just touching the surface. I

mean, there are so many hateful things that go on there that I can't even begin to touch on them all. They legitimize hate. They use it. People call it clickbait. That's what it is. It's clickbait. If you associate with groups like that, you're encouraging them, and you're saying that that's okay. Sure, maybe you didn't spew hateful facts or lies while you were being interviewed that day or, well, maybe you didn't retweet something particularly hateful, but you're supporting it. So it becomes a partisan issue when you as a partisan person choose to support that kind of work.

4:40

If you didn't read this article, there was a really great article written. It was *Vice* that published the article in August 2017, which I will table tomorrow. It talks about their very long – I think it was eight months long – study on hate groups and the rich history of hate in Alberta but also some of the growing hate. Some of the things they talked about: they reminded us about some recent rallies in Edmonton. I think that in 2012 there was a particularly vile rally here in Edmonton in Churchill Square. Again, people are starting to focus on immigration, of course, spreading lies and misinformation about immigration and anti-Islamophobia.

I heard a member from over there talk about how great their leader was at bringing us together. Well, I can think of a lot of examples where, you know, that really wasn't the case. I remember comments made by him in the House of Commons where he wanted an English-to-English translation from somebody whose first language clearly wasn't English. That wasn't just a slip-up. He also worked pretty hard, after the courts ruled otherwise, to prevent Muslim women from wearing head coverings at citizenship ceremonies. Why? Ask yourselves: why? That doesn't seem like a uniting activity to me.

Anyway, more recently I remember that the federal government was trying to pass some prevention of anti-Islamic activity after the mass shooting in Quebec City, and although we were not there – we were not debating that federal movement or those decisions – the stuff that was coming out of Alberta was disgusting. The stuff that was coming out of Rebel media, who the opposition supports by participating in their activities, was awful, and it was vile. That's the kind of stuff that incites hatred.

The other kind of stuff that incites hatred is promoting these fallacies and these lies about immigration, about religions that are not yours, about rights. You know, we heard earlier today somebody talking about the need to stand up for property rights, which I agree with – we're all here to stand up for everybody's rights – yet they turned around and walked out when faced with an opportunity to protect women's rights. That's a form of hatred. When you have innocent women trying to get some health care and exercise control over their own bodies and they're faced with this wall of hate, lies, and misleading photographs, that's not good. That is not good at all. I do think that we're in denial about the growing hatred, and all of us as leaders in our communities and as elected officials absolutely have the responsibility to do everything we can to counter that, to not incite hatred.

I wanted to go back, too, a little bit. Clearly, folks across are not looking up too much because we're talking about Rebel. I would like to remind the House just how vile some of the things that they've said and published are. One of the people that they hired went to Israel and published information about why they hate Jews. They actually blamed Jews for the Holodomor. I don't even understand that. They literally gave and shared their platform with the KKK Grand Wizard David Duke – I can't believe that I'd ever say his name in this place, but they did – and white nationalist Richard Spencer. Why on earth would you support an organization that promotes that kind of hate and then come to this place and say

that you support legislation that aims to check the activities of groups trying to seek society status in this province when you are guilty of associating with these groups that promote violence and hatred and misinformation?

I'll tell you that I think it was last year when, very much in the news, people were talking about Omar Khadr and the federal government. Actually, the Supreme Court of Canada had ruled that the government had obtained evidence during oppressive circumstances, which led to some other things, and the government of Canada negotiated a settlement. I wasn't saying that I agreed, that I was happy. I was neutral on that point. What I was saying is that it's important to respect the Supreme Court of Canada. That was it. Instantly I was flooded by the Rebel crew with these horrible, nasty messages. They have meme makers that are so fast, it made my head spin. I had a picture of myself with "traitor" over it or a bullet hole in my head. This is the kind of stuff that incites hatred. I won't even get into all of the history of this case because it's not my case. I'm not a lawyer. But I do trust the Supreme Court of Canada.

I just want to say again that I am incredibly thankful to the member for bringing forward this bill. It's important. A few people have asked: "Why wasn't this done earlier? This should have been done a long time ago." We say that a lot these days, but it should have been done a long time ago.

You can propose amendments to try to make it better, like what normally happens. You can say that it's not partisan, but it is. You can do everything you can in your personal power in your communities and in this place to say: that's not okay. When you go to your own convention and you have people attacking indigenous people for taxes, you can stand up and say: that's hate. When you talk about people that are different from you, that practise different religions, and you hear them say things like that, you can say: that's wrong. You can point out that the garbage that is spewed by the Rebel is wrong, and you can choose to distance yourself. Or you can just vote for this and say, you know: you're good.

I would encourage everybody in this House to support this bill.

Again, I thank you very much for your work.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It really is an honour to stand up this afternoon and speak to Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. The intent of the bill, to prevent the establishment of hate organizations, is laudable. I want to acknowledge the Member for Calgary-Klein, my neighbour in north-central Calgary, for bringing forward this bill. As private members we don't have a lot of opportunity to bring forward any policy directly to the House, and it's really commendable that he's using this opportunity to address the very upsetting and distasteful subject of racism. We certainly don't need to embolden hate groups by allowing them to create societies for racism or to give them assistance in organizing. By not allowing them to incorporate, the bill reduces access to banking services, public funding sources, and the legitimacy that some of them seek to spread their hate in Alberta.

[The Speaker in the chair]

One of my constituency staff members, Saima Jamal, has worked for decades to overcome racism and hate in Calgary and in the province. As an antiracism activist she knows how pernicious racism is in Calgary, with followers of groups like the Alberta Three

Percenters, Soldiers of Odin, and Polish priest Jacek Miedlar claiming their racism loudly and proudly in Calgary. She's told me about the impact this hatred has on the communities she works with. Their actions make it explicitly clear that not everyone thinks racism is awful and that hateful individuals have gained more of a foothold in Alberta.

In the '90s I worked for Shell Nigeria in Calgary, and our workplace was very diverse. Most of my colleagues came from Nigeria while some were from England and the Caribbean. I was enlightened about racism by my colleagues. I grew up in a small town in northern Alberta, and at that time most of the faces I saw in school and on the streets in my town looked a lot like me. I was privileged to live so long and not see much racism. But they told me that racism in the U.S. was much easier to identify because it was overt. They knew who the racists were.

4:50

Racism has been deeply embedded in parts of Alberta culture for a long time, but it was mostly hidden. Recently, however, people who hold racist views have been emboldened by the normalization of intolerance in the political discourse, mostly in the U.S., and on social media. The experience and negative impacts on the tens of thousands of Albertans who experience racism and hate in public, at work, online, and in the receipt of services speaks to the urgent need to address casual and systemic racism in Alberta. We must be active. We cannot be complacent on racism. As elected members of this Assembly it is incumbent on all of us to moderate our social media pages and remove any intolerant or racist comments. Homophobia, misogyny, sexism, and racism cannot remain unchallenged because to do so is to implicitly approve of them. The Alberta Party stands resolute in our commitment to challenge and remove any intolerant or racist comments on social media.

The bill is a good move in challenging hatred, but I would like to see it go further. There are some limitations with the bill, including a gap in the practical ability of the registrar to enforce its provisions. Existing societies currently receive very little oversight from the registrar about their activities as long as their paperwork is filed regularly. I'd be curious to know if or how the registrar can ensure that Alberta's over 58,000 existing incorporated societies do not have hateful objects or practices or that their actions under apparently benevolent objects are carried out in inclusive, nonracist, and nonhateful ways.

Despite decades of work the memberships and boards and clients of Alberta's 58,000-plus nonprofits do not consistently represent Alberta's diversity. This bill as it stands doesn't address existing embedded racism experienced by Albertans from nonprofit societies. How will the registrar address groups that try to incorporate by simply hiding their racist intentions under benign-appearing objectives? How many Albertans who are members of societies actually read society bylaws or objects? I believe the bill could be made better and more effective than in its current form by being informed by lived experiences.

I'm happy to support passing second reading of Bill 206. I look forward to discussing and improving this bill in debate, and I certainly urge all of my colleagues to support this bill as well.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to stand today to speak to this bill, brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-Klein, an act to amend the Societies Act. This is a very important and timely bill. As many members have observed today, we have seen a sharp rise in

language of hatred and intolerance here in Canada and, unfortunately, much of it here in Alberta, so it's incredibly important, I think, that we move forward on taking clear steps to show that we as public leaders do not tolerate, do not accept, and indeed will not provoke or stoke or incite this kind of language.

Local journalist Mack Lamoureux recently did an investigation through *Vice* magazine. He spent eight months investigating the inner workings of a group that is very openly anti-Islamic, largely based here in the province of Alberta and known as the Three Percenters. As one expert has described them: a wholesale lift of an American militia. A very frightening group. These are individuals who have heavy weapons. They buy shock canes. They openly posture online about being anti-Islamic; about conducting monitoring and surveillance of mosques, live-fire, paramilitary-style training; claiming that they're going to purchase land; making plans for creating smoke and flash bombs. In the words of their founder: what we like to consider ourselves is Canada's last line of defence from all enemies, both foreign and domestic; if the time would come and we would need to use force and take action, you know, we will do that.

This is a group, Mr. Speaker, that took their name from an American paramilitary group which organized after Barack Obama was elected President. I'm sure their only motivation there was the fact that he was a Democrat. I'm sure that was the only objectionable thing about that particular President.

Numerous people who are linked to the Three Percenters in the U.S. have been charged with crimes, including one gentleman who shot five people at a Black Lives Matter protest. Another member was arrested in a foiled bomb plot to bomb federal buildings in Atlanta. For almost a year now the Three Percenters chapter in Alberta, which has the most active members of the Three Percenters in Canada, has been slowly forming themselves into a militia-like organization according to the investigation by Mr. Lamoureux, with the chapter in Wild Rose Country boasting, at the time of his investigation, about 150 to 200 active members and over 1,600 members that subscribed online.

As I noted, they claim to be heavily armed. They like to post photos of their numerous weapons and guns that they own. They claim to meet on a weekly basis to train, and they clearly state: we are anti-Islam; we dislike Islam and the Muslims. This is a group that exists currently here in Alberta. They are big fans, Mr. Speaker, of spreading debunked news stories, far right wing commentary from sites like Rebel media, Infowars in the U.S. As I mentioned, they've openly admitted to surveilling mosques in Calgary, conducting live-fire paramilitary episodes.

This group, as Mr. Lamoureux uncovered, recently had plans to launch a series of recovery homes here in Edmonton called the freedom house Canada recovery homes. Now, a recovery home is a privately owned group home for residents that are recovering from drug addiction. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, you know that our government is strongly in support of offering supports to individuals who are recovering from substance use disorders. But this group was looking to open these homes as a means of trying to whitewash their reputation. There is a history of this with such groups. They went so far as to begin to consult with existing recovery homes. They held auctions amongst themselves, selling guns, knives, bikes, whatever they had, to raise money for this purpose, for the purpose of transferring 43 rental properties over to their group to operate. I quote from Mr. Lamoureux's article, with one of them stating: "Guys, this is huge, and will definitely put us into the media and public spotlight on a huge, huge positive note."

Mr. Speaker, these groups are real, they're alive, and they are active. The Soldiers of Odin, another group which was seen to begin

here in Alberta a couple of years ago, in 2016 were doing street cleanups and raising money for food banks while also spreading anti-Muslim rhetoric and marching in the streets. This is a common tactic of these kinds of groups. It is not necessarily unheard of that one of these groups might, then, try to register as a society in our province and try to access government dollars, grants, other forms of charity to support their cover work, to support work done in the community to hide the fact that what they are about is promoting hatred and intolerance and indeed endangering the lives of Canadians.

I think that, again, as I said, it's incredibly timely and incredibly appropriate that my colleague from Calgary-Klein has brought forward this bill to ensure that we can close this loophole, that we can protect Albertans from these groups trying to exploit that opportunity.

Now, I appreciate what the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills mentioned today about not wanting this to be a partisan bill, and indeed I can understand the spirit of that, Mr. Speaker. I think my colleague the Member for St. Albert said a lot of what I would have to say in that regard. I will recall that in February of last year I stood in this House and I loudly called out Rebel media because, indeed, in my work with many people from the Muslim community here in the city of Edmonton, they told me how the types of language that they saw from that group made them feel deeply uncomfortable and unsafe and targeted as Canadians.

As I have stated, I am deeply uncomfortable when I see our political leaders in any way appearing to support or incite or provoke this kind of language and this kind of behaviour for their own political gain. Indeed, in the last few years, Mr. Speaker, we have seen some shameful examples of that. I am glad that finally, after the events of Charlottesville, members of our political leaders distanced themselves from that site.

I look forward to the opportunity to speak to this more.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the time for consideration of this item of business is concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Electricity and Natural Gas Bills

504. Mr. Cyr moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce legislation that would prohibit distribution fees and levies to be charged on residential customers' electricity and natural gas bills unless there is an actual, measurable use of electricity or natural gas and which also caps administration fees on such bills at \$10.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege to stand before the Alberta Legislature to move Motion 504. This simply means that if you use natural gas or electricity, you pay for it. Period. If you don't use energy, you should not have to pay a fee other than the \$10-a-month administration fee. This motion is not a matter of some abstract or theoretical problem. It is one where there is a real problem for Albertans across this province, some of them my constituents and, I imagine, many constituents of other members as well.

I have two specific real-life examples I would like to share with you. The first one is a realtor named Louise, who reached out to my office for a meeting. During that meeting she identified that she has a lakeshore cabin and that she uses that cabin for the summer months. In the winter months she has significant fees on her bills

because she has infrastructure on her land. An important clarification is that this is infrastructure that she paid for, and even though she's not using the lines, she still has to pay significant fees. If she doesn't pay the fees, then the utility company will remove the infrastructure at no cost. However, should she wish to have the utility again, she would have to pay tens of thousands of dollars to reinstall it and be put on a waiting list, and it could take several months to install the lines. Clearly, this isn't a route that any landowner would take, so you're forced to pay the monthly fee for no service.

The second example is Chad, who received property through the passing of his father. During the grieving process Chad requested that the utilities be shut off and disconnected as he lived in Calgary and his father resided in Cold Lake. Chad thought that his obligations with the utilities ended, yet two years later, just when he lost his job, he got contacted by the utility company demanding back payments of several thousand dollars. He explained that he disconnected the utility, and they responded that you pay even though your services are disconnected. He was shocked and dismayed that as a utility they were clear that they were going to remove his utilities if he did not clear up the bill. However, if they removed the utilities and he wanted to reinstall them, it would be between \$30,000 to \$50,000. He had no money but had no choice but to come up with the money as property within the rural setting needs utilities in order for it to be sold, because nobody wants to buy a property without utilities on it.

These two examples show that the current system has put people into a situation where the utility has you over a barrel whether you pay for the service or not. This motion would eliminate all costs other than the \$10 administration fee when you don't use their services. However, when you do use their services, you would pay the rate that is charged to the general public.

This may seem like only a small number of individuals that may be impacted, but there are wider implications of this motion. If we look at renewables, renewable energy, and the direction that this current government is intent on moving Alberta towards, there is a problem. For many, it comes to the fact that the numbers just don't add up when you move your residence to renewables. It's just not viable. The problem is that renewables just aren't a stable source of energy, so many if not all will still need to be connected to the grid. When the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow, they have to have access to energy. This means that fees are added to the cost even though you aren't using the energy. By passing this motion, we would be reducing one of the largest burdens on renewable energy. When the sun is shining and the wind is blowing, the household would only be paying \$10 per month, and this, in the end, could save a family thousands of dollars.

The NDP continue to ask what the United Conservatives are contributing as ideas for moving Alberta forward with renewables. Well, this is an idea. This is an idea to move Alberta forward when it comes to installing renewables in residential households. Instead of more light bulbs, thermostats, and subsidies and grants, this will actually have a long impact that increases renewables installed in homes across the province. What is important to note is that there is no cost to government and minimal impact on our energy companies.

This motion also just makes sense. Why would we set up a system that has user fees with no services provided? It is like purchasing a cellphone for \$2,000 with a three-year contract with one provider and finishing the contract and the provider telling the customer that there is no pay-to-talk feature. It just simply doesn't exist. So if they don't continue paying for the phone that they've already paid for, they will take it back, and should that happen and should you need to be connected back to the telecommunication

grid, you need to buy another \$2,000 phone. They're completely happy to sell you another one. Therefore, continuing to pay for a phone that you already own just doesn't make sense, just like this motion that I'm trying to move forward.

I acknowledge that should you use a network, you need to pay the fees. This motion isn't about eliminating or challenging the current fee structure. That is another debate that needs to happen but isn't one that is happening with this motion. This is completely about: if you don't use the energy, there should only be a \$10 administration fee so that if you do need that energy, it will be there for you to use. This is good conservatism at work.

Mr. Speaker, good Albertans like Louise and Chad shouldn't be punished for the circumstances they're in. Like many Albertans in similar circumstances, all they want is fairness. I know that on this side of the House we talk a lot about fairness for ratepayers and taxpayers, but I also know that on the government side they hear a lot from their constituents on these issues as well. I know that the government members have also talked on occasion about fair practices for consumers. I would hope that they turn that talk into action here and vote to protect the interests of their constituents as I am proposing to do for mine and for the people like Louise and Chad all across our great province.

I would also hope that the government members, given all of their talk about enabling consumers to make choices to use green energy, will also support the motion on the basis that they're helping Albertans who want to pursue microgeneration with residential-scale wind and solar. If actions like this will assist the adoption of these technologies without burdening the taxpayer through costly subsidies and guarantees, why wouldn't we want to pursue them?

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we have adequately explained to the members of this House that this is indeed a real and important issue for everyday Albertans. I hope that members from all parties will join with me in voting for this motion and taking a step in the right direction and urging the government of Alberta to solve this problem.

I have members that will be speaking on this motion and go further in explaining how it doesn't just help a small subset, but it also helps additional groups within Alberta, and I will allow them to continue with those speeches.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an honour to speak on this motion.

5:10

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this motion. I rise to explain why I will be voting against Motion 504. Motion 504 would benefit a small number of people at the expense of other Alberta electricity consumers. Let me start by saying that I understand the basic motivation for the motion. We know that Albertans pay close attention to their utility bills, and we know that they are concerned about delivery costs. We understand the impact that rising or unpredictable utility rates can have on families and their budgets.

In fact, that is precisely why we are addressing energy costs on electricity bills in two key ways. First, we capped rates for electricity at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. We knew that the electricity system we inherited from the Conservatives was prone to bad price spikes. We heard from experts that this was only going to get worse over time because investors were no longer comfortable with the energy-only market like the Conservatives put in place. To protect consumers immediately, we capped rates so that Albertans didn't ever again have to fret about the threat of rates tripling in mere months.

But that was only an interim measure to give consumers immediate protection against the Conservatives' broken market. It bridges the time we need to take to bring in a system that stabilizes rates in the long run. We are doing that by introducing a capacity market, which is implemented through Bill 13, legislation that is currently before members of this Chamber. Unfortunately, the members opposite choose to forget the rampant price spikes that consumers have endured for years under the Conservatives' energy market system, but we remember them all too well. That's why we introduced Bill 13, to bring stability and steady affordability to electricity rates. It's a responsible measure to protect utility consumers.

Motion 504, by contrast, is not a responsible measure. Let me explain. Distribution systems are built to serve peak load so that everyone has access to a reliable electricity supply regardless of how much they use and when they need it. You can compare electricity infrastructure to a road system or a highway. It is built for everyone to use whenever they need to go somewhere, not just for frequent travellers. As distributors' infrastructure and operating costs are for the most part fixed and do not change regardless of energy consumption, the wires to your neighbourhood, in your neighbourhood, and right up to your house and your neighbour's house essentially cost the same no matter how much you or your neighbour use.

Now, say that your neighbour uses all the power and gas they need in December, when we often have peak usage, which is what the system is sized for. The system is sized for them to be able to use the energy on demand when they need it. Then they leave on holiday in January and February, so they don't use any power and natural gas, but when they come home in March, they still need the wires and pipes so that they can turn the lights on and the furnace on. They didn't need the wires or the pipes any less, and they didn't decrease the cost of those wires or pipes at all, but with this motion they would get two months free from paying for them even though they still need the wires and the pipes when they get home.

Now, someone has to pay for the building and maintenance of that infrastructure, and that someone is you, you and the rest of your neighbours and the people in your region. Why should your bill have to go up to cover their costs just because they went out of town for the winter? That's totally unfair, Mr. Speaker, and I have to believe that it is not what the member intended with this motion, but it's what the motion will clearly do.

Now, as the government that protects Albertans, we're not satisfied to just dismiss the member's motion. We know that we need to stay vigilant and take action on behalf of consumers. That's why we are introducing new penalties to ensure that utility service providers like distribution companies and retailers cannot bilk their customers with unwarranted and erroneous charges. That is an important part of Bill 13 as a strong, responsible measure to protect consumers. I encourage the member to support this legislation, which is still before the House. We are also taking a close look at all the bill components, and the Minister of Energy has asked her department to assess opportunities to develop policy to better manage electricity distribution costs in Alberta.

We inherited the system from the previous government, and we think that there are ways we can do better. This work includes finding ways to bring better and more effective regulation of electric distribution costs, and this work is already under way. It's the kind of real work that we need to undertake to reduce overall costs for consumers so that all consumers benefit from lower system costs. We can't rely on gimmicks that let a small number of particular customers pay less for a system that they equally need and then force those costs onto their neighbours, like we see with this motion.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is so flawed and so ill considered that I encourage all members to vote against it. It would hurt the pocketbooks of the vast majority of Albertans, and I encourage everyone to vote against it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I'm sure you will find unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for . . . just a second.

Mr. Hanson: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

The Speaker: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I saw you scan the room to see if anybody else was standing, you know, so I have to be a little offended by that.

Anyway, what I'd like to do is just stand and speak to Motion 504. I don't know whether this is what the member is referring to in this motion, but I'll just give you an example that I had in my constituency in the town of Two Hills. There was an old mechanic shop that had been sitting vacant for years, and the owner phoned me because he'd received a bill for \$1,500. Now, the previous summer and fall he had rented that space out and, prior to that, had not received any bills at all from the power company.

He was approached in the summer or fall by an individual that wanted to rent the property, so he said: "Okay. You can rent the property, but you have to take care of getting the power reinstated, getting the meter put in." The individual did that. He kept the lease up for about six months, and then he got a hold of the owner and said, "You know, I'm no longer requiring the rental of the place," so the deal was struck that he could vacate the premises on the understanding that he would disconnect the power and deal with the power company.

The owner was a little surprised when six months later he got a bill for \$1,500, so he contacted the leaseholder and was told: "Yes. You know, I cancelled everything." But, apparently, there's some loophole. The infrastructure company had leased the power supply agreement to another company, and they, without giving any notice to the owner, were continuing to bill this premise. The breakers were shut off. The meter was not running. There was no power consumption at all. So he was a little surprised when he got this bill for \$1,500.

He came to my office, and we had a chat. I phoned the power provider and asked them to explain it. They said, "Well, this is our policy," or whatever. After a couple of phone calls they finally agreed to reduce the bill by a thousand dollars, so they brought it down to \$500. I called the building owner, and I said, "They've decided to meet you kind of halfway," and he said: "No. I never signed a piece of paper with that company. I have no agreement with that company. There's no reason that I should owe them \$1,500 when no power was consumed at all. I had no knowledge that there was even an outstanding bill on the property or a caveat on the property."

I called the company back, and I said: "You know, he's not willing to accept that thousand dollar reduction. He would like the bill wiped out completely." At that time I asked them: "What piece of legislation allows you to do this anyway? If you could tell me that piece of legislation, maybe as a government we can look into it and see if it's fair to consumers or not." Well, about 15 minutes later

I got a call back from the company saying: "You know, tell that landowner that he doesn't have to worry about it. We're just going to waive this one."

To me, that tells me that there's something there that we need to look at. Maybe this isn't the answer, but I think it opens it up, that we do need to have a look at which legislation allows this to happen to Albertans and consumers and commercial property owners and residences. You know, as investors in buildings or residential properties we shouldn't be responsible for deals that are made without our knowledge and without our consent between a leaseholder or a renter and any power company or gas company.

5:20

If that's the intent of Motion 504 and if it opens up the investigation so that we can at least look at the legislation, find out where the problems are, and maybe tweak them to fix them a little bit, I'd be open to that. I think that the House should be at least open to the idea of looking into the legislation and protecting consumers, whether they be residential owners or commercial building owners.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other members that wish to speak? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Motion 504 on fees and levies on residential electricity and natural gas. This motion has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I would first draw attention to the fact that I would like this Legislature to consider that this is not actually a bill but a motion. It's just a motion. If a motion is passed by this Legislature, it's just simply saying that this is a direction we think the government should consider going in, that this would be a good idea. This is not going to change the law, but it is going to give direction to the government, give an idea to the government about where we think the government should go. So let's be clear. This doesn't create legislation. It's a motion. It's not a bill. It's just there to consider the issue, in this case an issue surrounding electricity and natural gas and the fees that surround that.

So what are we asking the government to consider? Well, we're asking that a motion be considered that would prohibit the charging of distribution fees and levies on electricity or on natural gas when a residential property is not actually accessing either the natural gas or the electricity, that if a property is owned by an Albertan but that property is not being lived in or the owner of the property is not accessing the electricity or the natural gas, they should not be forced to pay the distribution fees and the levies charged. It just makes sense that a citizen should not have to pay the levies and the fees for a service that they are not actually receiving. This has the ring of fairness to it, I think.

Currently if a consumer is placed in a situation in which they are responsible for a property that is not in use, for which they are not using electricity, not using natural gas, they may still be charged hundreds of dollars in fees and levies. This motion would seek to allow those who are in that situation to effectively disconnect their utilities and be exempt from paying distribution fees and that a cap of \$10 would be placed on there for an administration fee simply because they are a part of the grid.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in Alberta a significant portion of our utility bills are as a result of the fees and the levies that are applied to them. I don't know about any of my other fellow MLAs, but I've had many seniors come through my office very concerned about those

extra levies and those extra fees, even to the point where they're wondering if they can stay in their house. We have people that are in very constrained circumstances, and they often face the situation where there is more month than there is income, and they want this Legislature to address those fees and those levies.

While Motion 504 may not address that whole wide-ranging issue, it does in a fairly narrow way address at least a portion of that. Currently consumers do not have the ability to avoid paying those fees even if a property sits unused for a significant period of time, even if they are not consuming any measurable amount of electricity or natural gas. In fact, it's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the only way to really avoid paying fees and levies is to have a property physically disconnected, and this could result in thousands of dollars of extra costs should, at some point in time in the future, the property owner desire to be reconnected to the grid.

Mr. Speaker, some Albertans desire to hook their residences up to renewable energy sources for microgeneration, and while they would like to provide their energy needs from a renewable source like solar or wind, et cetera, they would also like to remain hooked up to the grid for those times when their intermittent renewable energy sources don't actually meet their electricity needs. The problem is that when the residences' electricity needs are met by the renewable energy and they are not using energy from the grid, they are still expected to pay the fees and levies for the electricity.

Motion 504 is just simply a common-sense measure based on the principle of fairness. If you're using a utility, you are expected to pay the associated costs and fees. However, if you are not using that service or consuming the product, you should not have to pay exorbitant fees.

I would therefore recommend to this Assembly that they support this motion. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Any other members prepared to speak to Motion 504?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close debate.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it's disappointing to see that the government won't be considering supporting this motion when we hear the government every day get up and say that they want to see a change when it comes to responsible government. To vote down a common-sense motion like this one is shameful.

I've heard some that say: well, if you don't like it, just sell the property. That seems a little radical when you're looking at the circumstances involving this. I'll also say that when we hear the government talking about fair share, that does seem like a concept that a socialist government would buy into. [interjections] I wholeheartedly agree. The only thing that I will say that counteracts this is that when you look at a socialist government – what they're trying to do is that they're trying to move Alberta to a renewable source. What they've done is that they're looking to shut down our coal industry, which supplies about 50 per cent of our energy right now. When we've got ideas on how we can move Alberta in the direction that this current government is looking at, you would think that they would at least entertain the thought.

Now, my hon. colleague had brought up that – you know what? – when you're moving a motion, this does not mean that we're creating law. What it does mean is that we're reviewing the motion, a sensible motion. Then what happens is that they will take that information and they'll create laws. We've got a government that is clearly moving in a direction of reducing our fossil fuel dependency. So when I have

this clear motion in my hands here, that says that if we can reduce the red tape or the burden that's placed on residential – residential – renewable energy, solar and wind, that makes it more attractive to the consumer, which means that we will end up moving in this direction without a dollar spent by the government, you would think that this government would take notice.

5:30

What happens is that we've got a government that is so focused on their direction, they are unwilling to take interest in other ideas. We have a government that would rather put billions of dollars into paying out PPAs, breached agreements, than deal with something as simple as saying: let's give the consumer the ability to do this on their own. Let's make this viable for all Albertans and then move in the direction that this government is looking to do. What we end up with is a government that says: we inherited a problem from the past government, and – you know what? – our way is the only way to fix this.

Well, clearly this isn't working because we've seen incredible raised rates when it comes to both natural gas and electricity. This is becoming a real concern for most Albertans, especially when we start looking at the most vulnerable: our seniors, our disabled, and our single parents. The fact is that should they need to shut down utilities during the summer months to be able to make payments, that option is there for them in a way that is a responsible way when it comes to forming government.

Now, again, it is disappointing to see that we have a government that is unwilling to follow through with a clear mandate that they have said that they have from Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this motion, I would encourage every member in this House to consider it and to vote for this. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:32 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Cyr	Hanson	Strankman
Gill	Smith	Yao

Against the motion:

Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Connolly	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Dang	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Woollard
Goehring	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 38
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, who does not have a pair of red socks, do you have something to say?

Mr. Mason: I'm not sure you know what colour my socks actually are, Mr. Speaker.

We have made good progress, we have done good business, and I would move that we adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:37 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