



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 5, 2018

Day 38

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
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
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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.

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a group of nearly 50 seniors who are here today visiting the Legislature in honour of Seniors' Week June 3 to 9. These seniors boarded buses in Lloydminster and Vermilion early this morning, and they have spent the day participating in a program that's been co-ordinated by visitor services. While it's dangerous to single out one senior because they're all special, I do want to make special mention of one of the seniors who has actually been a leader of the group, and that's Mrs. Judy Woyewitka. Judy, where are you? Stand, even if you don't want to. Mrs. Woyewitka has a long and very illustrious service in the public. She was Vermilion's first female mayor and served on Vermilion town council for 21 years total as well as 12 as mayor. Last Friday Judy was awarded an honorary degree at the convocation ceremonies at Lakeland College for being Lakeland College's distinguished citizen. My congratulations to Judy. I'd like to ask my entire group to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain. Nice to see you here.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly guests from the Acheson Business Association, which represents over 350 local businesses in the Acheson industrial area. Acheson is a thriving industrial hub employing over 50,000 people every single day. Here today are President Roger Ward from Morgan Construction and Environmental Ltd.; Past-president and Director Dale Allen, Sci-Tech Engineered Chemicals; Vice-president Terry Janzen, Strongco Corporation; Treasurer Cathy Dool, Hayworth Equipment; Secretary Jo-Ann Willis, Willy's Trucking; Associate Director Sheldon Jacobs, KPMG LLP; Director Chris Konelsky, United Construction Company; Director Darren Boyde, Jen-Col Construction Ltd.; and the executive director of the Acheson Business Association, Natalie Birnie. I thank them all for the great work that they do supporting Acheson businesses, our entire region, and I ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, especially the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, members of the Alexander First Nation council on health services. We have here today Councillor Joe Kootenay, Councillor Anita Arcand, Councillor Cheryl Savoie, as well as Executive Assistant of Health Susan Budnick. They are members of the council and are working very hard to improve the lives of the people they represent out at Alexander. I have invited them here today to attend question

period and ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the best volunteers in all of the province of Alberta, from Edmonton-McClung, whose help, support, and friendship I so greatly appreciate. Stand as I mention your names, please. I am proud to introduce Francine Bérubé, Patrick Barbosa, Carla Drader, Ramona Sather, Alan Sather, Selam Beyene, Leah Naicken, Adrienne Arnott, Michael Arnott, Joscelyn Proby, and Usha Bachhu. I ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you two nominees of the 37th annual Ernest C. Manning innovation awards. The Manning awards recognize innovation and discover, encourage, and reward Canadian innovators. Today on behalf of BioNeutra North America Inc. we are joined by Bill Smith, chair of the board and former mayor of Edmonton, who is representing nominee Dr. Zhu for creating a low-calorie natural sweetener, and on behalf of Run-Withit Myrna and Dean Bittner, who were nominated for their innovation in synthetic customer environments. We are also joined by my friend and chair of the Manning awards board, Sol Rolinger. I would now ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of the Strathcona county chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women, which is a nonpartisan, voluntary, and self-funded organization with clubs across Canada. Since 1919 CFUW has worked to improve the status of women and promote human rights, public education, social justice, and peace. The MLAs for Edmonton-Mill Creek and Lethbridge-East as well as myself are proud to be CFUW members. It is an honour to represent active and engaged citizens like my guests in the gallery today, who work to support the well-being and success of women both here at home and around the world. I now ask Lesley Ratcliff, Tammy Irwin, Amy Macleod, Ruth Eckford, Carol Wilson, Carol Hare, and Shirley Reid to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests from Sustainival, the world's first green carnival. Here today, Founder and CEO Joey Hundert, Executive Director Odette Hutchings, and Director Dominic Mishio. Sustainival operates a full-scale carnival midway that runs entirely on renewable energy. It's going to be taking place in Edmonton, Fort McMurray, and Lethbridge. It's in Edmonton this weekend at the Edmonton Expo Centre June 7 to 10 and then in Fort McMurray at McDonald Island park from June 14 to 17, thanks in part to support through our

climate change office. Sustainival provides an important opportunity for Albertans to join the conversation on sustainability, the potential of exponential clean technologies, and the inspiring sustainability initiatives taking place in our province. I see that my guests have risen. I ask them to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, any other introductions? The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: [Remarks in Tagalog] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you many members who are strong advocates and leaders from Alberta's Filipino community. This past weekend I was pleased to celebrate with Filipino Albertans in Edmonton and Calgary as our government proclaimed each and every June forevermore as Philippine Heritage Month in Alberta. Today Alberta is home to more than 175,000 Filipinos, making Alberta the second-largest Filipino place in Canada. I hope that all members of Alberta will join us in celebrating the tremendous contributions of generations of Filipinos to Alberta's faith, civic, cultural, and economic communities, of course, as well. I ask that my guests rise as I say their names: Ida, Marco, Grace, Erica, Lucy, Annie, Jun, Swee-Hin, Virginia, Josephine, Tess, and Kehrl, and if there are any others, please also rise. [Remarks in Tagalog] everyone, and please, colleagues, join me in extending the warm welcome to our guests.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Acheson Industrial Area

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so proud of the part of Alberta that I represent, and I am so proud of our region, which is prosperous in large part because of the Acheson industrial area. The Acheson industrial area is one of Alberta's largest economic engines. Consisting of 10,600 acres, it is the largest medium industrial area in Alberta. Three hundred businesses from small to large call Acheson home, and 50,000 people every day come from all over the Edmonton region and beyond to do work and business. Seven hundred and fifty billion dollars flow through Acheson annually, and it provides \$15 million in taxes to help fund the services all Albertans need.

1:40

Acheson is also in a strategic location. It is serviced by three main highway corridors and by main line rail, is near three airports, and is only 35 kilometres north of the EIA. The success of the Acheson industrial area is due in part to the great work that has been done by the Acheson Business Association, members of which are present today and have been introduced. The association is made up of businesses and professional people with the primary purpose of promoting the commercial, industrial, social, and civic interests of the Acheson industrial area and the surrounding communities. Since its inception in 2004 the association's unwavering business vision and commitment to our community have helped it to achieve much for Alberta.

Looking to the future, sustainable development and balancing industry and environmental stewardship is the association's mantra. Energy efficiency and green buildings and technologies are front of

mind as the Acheson industrial area moves forward. Their community efforts include numerous fundraising events like Make a Difference Christmas Campaign and the new Hockey for Hampers, and proceeds from their annual golf tournament and participation in the Coldest Night of the Year go directly to the Parkland Food Bank Society.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to have the Acheson industrial area and the Acheson Business Association not just in my region but in Alberta. Thank you.

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

Union Certification

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring we warned this NDP government that the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act could open the door for union abuses. We warned that secret ballots are a fundamental pillar of democracy, consent, and transparency, which this bill eliminated. We now see that the extended powers the Alberta Labour Relations Board has been given are most definitely being used to support the unionization of Alberta's workforce. Quotes taken from workers in a news article in February 2018 say, and I quote, that the labour law in Alberta designed to empower workers has left labourers in Calgary saying they felt tricked, bullied, and voiceless. Workers allege that they were deceived into signing union cards and unwittingly made history in what's believed to be Alberta's first union certification without an employee vote.

Workers at Icon West Construction were approached by union officials at the gate of their secured company workplace. One worker said that he was approached by a union official who said that he owed \$250 in past dues, but if he paid \$2 now and signed, his dues would be wiped clean. The duped worker said: instead, he used my signature not for a receipt but to sign me up for the union.

Others were taken advantage of due to their poor English, and yet others were told that they would never work in Calgary again if they didn't sign these union cards. Then to add insult to injury, when 90 per cent of the workers wanted a secret ballot vote, at an ALRB hearing they said no. One of the workers complained that the board didn't want to hear the stories of bullying or how they were misled by union officials.

Last year we warned that the NDP plan to take away the absolute right to a secret ballot for union certification votes would hurt workplace democracy and hurt both Alberta workers and employers. The right to a secret ballot for workers must be restored, Mr. Speaker.

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

Agriculture in Edmonton-Manning

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Edmonton-Manning is very fortunate to have some of the best agricultural land in the province. Places such as Riverbend Gardens have been family owned and operated for three generations. Riverbend Gardens played a crucial role in the creation of both the Edmonton downtown farmers' market and the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market. They also support our communities through their community-supported agriculture program.

Horse Hill Berry Farm offers four varieties of raspberries at their U-pick farm in northeast Edmonton, which is another sweet addition to our constituency. Norbest Farms has served the greater Edmonton area for generations. You may be familiar with Norbest Farms from their famous Great Potato Giveaway, where they gave away over 45,000 kilograms of potatoes in 2009 to thousands of

Albertans. We are extremely grateful to our family-owned and -operated growers and gift shops such as Kuhlmann's greenhouse and the Root Seller. Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-Manning is also home to our tree nurseries such as Sunstar Nurseries and Arrowhead Nurseries. Last but not least, northeast Edmonton is home to Lady Flower Gardens, which provides supervised access for experiential learning opportunities on 93 acres of land to nonprofit partners and donates to our local food banks. You can find many of our local producers at the Miller Crossing Farmers' Market, located at our Kingsway Legion every Sunday with over 50 vendors.

Mr. Speaker, demand for locally produced food continues to grow in Alberta. Alberta's local food industry is a key part of our economy. Farmers' markets and direct farm purchases exceeded \$1 billion in 2016. Our government recently passed the Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. This will help support those local growers. We also established a heavy transport corridor northwest of Edmonton, that will help maintain the integrity of this vital agricultural land.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government which values local agriculture and to represent Edmonton-Manning, a special constituency where agriculture is cherished and where we do not take the land we have for granted.

Thank you.

Alberta Advantage and Government Policies

Mr. Gotfried: The Alberta advantage: it rolls off the tongue so easily, so familiar to us all, yet somehow in these days of the NDP world view it seems but an elusive concept. Investors take flight, small businesses struggle, unemployment lingers, confidence wanes, people leave, yet talk of incentives is touted as a panacea for all of our economic woes.

But the failure is not of Albertans, not of the entrepreneurial spirit that still flows through our veins, not of the rich bounty that we have been blessed with. It is the failure of this government to understand and appreciate that their ideology, attitude, and the heavy hand of socialist dogma are real and have so severely damaged our economic fundamentals as to have stolen something that can only be described in the most technical of terms. Yes, the Alberta NDP have robbed us of our provincial mojo. I hear it from my neighbours in Calgary-Fish Creek, I hear it in downtown Calgary, I hear it at backyard barbecues, and I hear it across our great province: "What happened to the Alberta we love? Where will I go if this continues?"

Mr. Speaker, I also hear from Albertans that they want responsible government, they want accountable government, they want effective and efficient government, they want a compassionate government. But they also want to pass on a legacy of wealth and prosperity, not the burden of debt, to future generations. That is a sense of right and wrong we know as Albertans, part of the prairie work ethic we are proud of and the pioneer spirit that built this province. I hear from Albertans that they expect a government that provides an opportunity to all Albertans to reach their greatest potential.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019 Albertans will have an opportunity to choose that government. My colleagues and I are committed to earning their confidence and trust to lead them not on this government's unconscionable \$96 billion path to perpetual imbalance but on a confident, visionary, inspirational, can-do path back to the Alberta advantage.

Thank you.

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

Seniors' Week

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As many of you know, June 3 to 9 is Seniors' Week in Alberta. We all have seniors in our lives, and seniors are vital members of our communities as parents and grandparents, mentors and friends, and colleagues.

Alberta seniors are actively engaged in their communities. According to recent statistics almost 20 per cent of Albertans over the age of 65 are active in the workforce, and nearly half of seniors aged 65 to 74 volunteer in their communities. Because seniors contribute so much to the lives of their families, friends, and neighbours, it is important that they are able to age in their communities. The latest numbers show that more than 90 per cent of seniors live in their own homes. That means that the supports and services that government has put in place to help seniors stay in their communities are working.

But we have more work to do to ensure Albertans can age in dignity close to their loved ones. Our government is committed to this work. Each year we provide close to \$3 billion in services and supports for seniors. In Budget 2018 we protected the Alberta seniors' benefit so that thousands of seniors have up to \$280 a month when they really need it. We also launched a home repair and adaptation program to help seniors age in their homes close to loved ones. We passed legislation that protects seniors in the workplace by prohibiting discrimination based on age through the Alberta Human Rights Act. Those are just a few examples of the supports for seniors that our government has invested in.

For more than 30 years Alberta has celebrated our seniors. This week and every week I hope everyone takes a moment to spend quality time with an older person, to recognize them, and to thank them for all they mean to us and to our communities.

Thank you.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

Mr. McIver: We live in hope, Mr. Speaker. On this side we really want the Trans Mountain pipeline to be built. Our NDP government has promised to put Alberta up to \$2 billion more in debt to help buy an old but profitable pipeline. They promised to pay up to that \$2 billion to solve not a money problem but a rule of law problem. It's like taking your car to the mechanic, saying that it runs great but has a flat tire, and the mechanic gives your vehicle a tune-up and forgets about the flat. The driver is now stuck on the side of the road after paying the \$2 billion tune-up bill, broken-hearted about the fact that the tire is still flat and they can't drive. This is where we are now on the Trans Mountain pipeline file.

For a year the United Conservative Party has asked this government to confront illegal protesters. Our leader has offered many ideas to put pressure on B.C., most of them ignored by the government. The Alberta NDP and federal Liberals instead chose to ridicule great ideas offered up by the Leader of the Official Opposition. They focused on a crisis of financing when it was always a crisis of confidence, in hopes that Albertans and Canadians would not notice the cowardly way these governments failed to push back the illegal protesters. They put their own political convenience in front of the real interests of Canada and Alberta.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, this Alberta NDP and their allies the Trudeau Liberals have left Alberta and all of Canada in the ditch so that they can pander to their real friends now protesting against the Trans Mountain pipeline. The B.C. NDP are still not onside. The uncertainties that made the project unviable for the private sector

still exist. Meanwhile, the rest of us are stuck on the side of the road with a flat social licence tire, having paid for an unneeded tune-up.

This is how the NDP has solved our pipeline problem, but we can still hope for better. We hope that the Prime Minister while in Alberta today will promise to push the illegal protesters back. We hope the NDP will save their high-five media conferences until it really is mission accomplished. Then and only then can all of Alberta and Canada join in that celebration.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Deaths of Children in Care

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today sad news about an increase in the number of deaths of children in care of the province of Alberta. It is sad for, I'm sure, all of us to learn of an increase of seven deaths of children in care, an increase of 26 per cent for 2017 over the previous year. Can the government explain why these numbers have increased given the great focus on protecting children in care and what plans the government has to address what appears to be a deteriorating situation?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We know that, frankly, any deaths of children in care are too many deaths, and it is an issue with which we have been incredibly seized, as have members on both sides of the aisle. We are continuing to move forward as quickly as we can with as many plans as we can to improve the situation and to protect kids in care. We've moved forward already on phase 1 of the committee's recommendations, and we are very close to completing phase 2. In addition, we are continuing to invest further in child protection.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. the Premier for her answer, Mr. Speaker. The ministerial panel on children in care reported back several months ago. We're now at the end of this Legislature session this week, and no legislation has been brought forward by the government to give effect to those recommendations. Why has the government not brought forward legislation, and will it commit to do so as soon as this House resumes?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we did bring forward legislation with respect to the first phase of the committee's work, so we moved as quickly as we could. In addition, in the interim what we've done is we've significantly increased resources to the ministry that is engaged in the work of protecting children in care. As well, we've been working with the federal government to improve the level of services that occur in First Nations communities. We will continue to do that work, and we will absolutely do whatever is necessary legislatively or otherwise.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier. Unfortunately, the ministerial panel was prevented or precluded from exploring the tragic Serenity case in detail. Such an exploration would have allowed for, I think, more detailed recommendations and lessons to

be learned from the atrocious mishandling of Serenity's case. Why did the government preclude the committee from that detailed investigation of Serenity's case, the failure of which handicapped the entire process?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we don't agree that it did handicap the entire process. It was a very broad-based consultation where all members of the House were able to engage and stakeholders and people impacted by the issue were given a great range within which to engage. During the course of the work of the committee the Serenity case was before the courts. In fact, having it go before the committee would have prevented the courts from doing their work, which was absolutely not in the best interest. That's why we didn't do it. Members opposite who were here at the time were fully aware of that. At the same time, I believe that the committee was able to get good work done.

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

Surgery Wait Times

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are more reports today about growing wait times for Albertans seeking critical health care. The CBC reports that Judy Wales waited an agonizing 76 weeks for shoulder replacement surgery. She sought out an Edmonton chronic pain management clinic but ended up on yet another wait-list. Why are wait-lists growing for people like Judy Wales, causing them to live in pain as their health deteriorates and often as they are forced to take painkillers, which can also be harmful to their health in the long run?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will say that, you know, we empathize with all Albertans who are forced to be on wait-lists to wait for surgeries. We know that it's absolutely very difficult for them and for their family members who are watching them wait. That's why we're doing everything we can to continue to invest in our health care system to ensure that we can get better outcomes with respect to that. As part of Budget 2018 we've allocated \$40 million to address wait times for surgeries, and we'll continue to do the work that is necessary to ensure that Albertans' health care needs are well met.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information indicates that wait times in Alberta for hip replacement surgery, knee replacement surgery, cataract surgery have all grown since 2015 even though the government is spending more money on the health system, a significant increase in health spending. My question for the Premier is: why are Alberta patients getting less for more money?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that we are in fact making progress overall with respect to wait times, and we will continue to invest in our public health care system to make sure that we bring those wait times even lower. What I will say, however, is that what will not help reduce wait times are the privatization plans, either of funding or of delivery,

that have been offered up by the members opposite. What those will do is create two wait-lists, one for the very wealthy and one for the rest of us. Absolutely not the solution to improving this problem.

Mr. Kenney: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the wealthy and the desperate very often end up taking their pain and their dollars to the United States for care because they aren't willing to wait two years for surgery here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, heart valve surgery wait times, according to AHS, are up by 40 per cent since 2015. Interventions on the stomach have increased by 12 weeks since 2015. Interventions on lymph nodes have increased by 35 per cent in terms of the time it takes, increased by four weeks since 2015. Again, why is the government spending – where is the money going? Is it going to bureaucracy? Why isn't it going to patients and reducing wait times?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what we've been able to do is make progress in some areas, yet we know there is still work to be done in other areas. Our government has premised that work on a couple of foundational principles. First of all, we need to finally ensure that there is stability within the health care system as opposed to having it become a political football, which is what happened under the previous government. Nor should it be the place for experimental privatization opportunities, which also created problems. We have also ensured that it's received stable funding. These are the things that will ensure that we're able to make better progress and deliver better health care in the long run.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Eagle Spirit Pipeline Project

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to come back to an issue I raised yesterday, which is the proposed Eagle Spirit pipeline, a proposal of a consortium of First Nations to create a pipeline to ship Alberta oil to global markets through the northern B.C. coast. Will the Premier agree with me that this is a project that we should in principle support as we pursue multiple options for global market access for Alberta energy and that we ought to support any good-faith initiative by First Nations to participate in our energy industry?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I believe the member heard yesterday when he asked this question, our Minister of Energy has met with the proponents of that particular project, and we're certainly very interested in continuing to work with them on that project. We are, in fact, also very supportive of a number of different consortiums of indigenous groups that are looking to engage more effectively or more prosperously in pipeline construction, either with the Eagle Spirit or with the Trans Mountain. We'll continue to do that work because we know that it will ultimately result in better returns for Albertans.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the minister has met with the proponents. The problem is that the federal government has a bill before Parliament, Bill C-48, that would make it impossible, illegal to export oil through the northern B.C. coast with a tanker traffic ban. Will the Premier on behalf of the government of Alberta and in solidarity with the First Nations consortium proposing the Eagle Spirit pipeline call on the federal government

to withdraw Bill C-48 to allow the prospect of the Eagle Spirit to proceed?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what we have done already and what the Minister of Energy has done is written to the federal government indicating that we think that the tanker ban in its current iteration is too broad and may well limit opportunities that may at some point in the future exist. We know that that work has to continue, and we will continue to work collaboratively with indigenous partners.

Quite honestly, we know that it was the former federal government's failure to do that that resulted, ultimately, in the death of Northern Gateway, and we know that they can't make that decision again.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: It was actually the federal government's stated intention of introducing Bill C-48 that led to their veto of Northern Gateway. It was a decision of the current government of Canada.

I'm glad to hear that the government of Alberta has raised concerns, but could we maybe get a little bit of clarity on that, Mr. Speaker, and move that from an expression of concern to actual opposition to an unnecessary ban on northern tanker traffic? Does the Premier not understand that it would be beneficial to our industry, our jobs, and our economy and to these First Nations pipeline proponents if we could at least potentially get northern coast access?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the member opposite has displayed his very high level of talent at rewriting history, but I'm pretty sure that the court decision that killed Northern Gateway rendered its decision on the deliberation process of the former Conservative federal government.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, what we will do is continue to engage with the federal government. As I've said, we've articulated that we have concerns about it. We're not going to do gratuitous insults. We're not going to tweet things at them. We will however engage on how this is a problem. We need to be respectful of indigenous partners along the coast and on the path.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

AHS Report on Health Worker Mental Health Supports

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister of Health, yesterday I asked you about a report done on mental health supports and morale within AHS, and I asked if you would direct them to release that report. Your response talked about some of the things that your government is doing, which is fine, but you didn't answer the question, and you didn't even mention the report. Minister, I'll ask you again. Will you direct AHS to release any reports that they currently have on the state of mental health supports in the health care system?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am so incredibly proud of the work that our front-line paramedics do in our province and all of those who work in terms of emergencies. When I

talk to Albertans about EMS, they talk about how it's the scariest time of their life when they need to call 911 and wait for that help and how much they appreciate the front-line support. In turn, we certainly need to give that support to the front lines as well, including supporting the path to mental readiness and increasing opportunities for mental health supports for all front-line workers. I receive regular updates from AHS and look forward to receiving their advice on how we can continue to support front-line responders.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, I've always commended your government for the additional resources and supports for EMS, which you talked about yesterday. However, I spoke to many paramedics yesterday after question period, and they don't feel that those measures are making enough of a difference. Minister, have you read the report? Does it identify where we're failing front-line health care workers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I believe that the member referred to a report that was commissioned by Alberta Health Services. I have not received said report, but I do regularly communicate with their employers, whether it's Alberta Health Services or any of the contracted employers in Alberta that work with our paramedics as well. I have to say how grateful I am for their front-line services and the work they do, how proud I am that our government invested \$23 million more to expanding supports and expansion of those services. I understand that the caucus that asked the question – I think one person voted for it, one person voted against it, and one person didn't vote. I have to say: where do you stand on front-line services and the people of this province, hon. member?

Mr. Fraser: Minister, your refusal to share vital information with this House is troubling. Whatever your reasons for not directing the release of this report, they have to be weighed against the potential to save the lives of front-line health care workers. Any potential political liabilities that you may have in this report or that this report may present your government aren't worth the delay. To the same minister: will you direct the release of this report before it's too late?

Ms Hoffman: Again, hon. member, I am very proud to work with the employers, with the unions, and with the workers that provide this important service across Alberta. I look forward to hearing advice from all parties on how we can continue to strengthen and support folks. The number one thing they've said to me is, "Get us more resources," Mr. Speaker, and that's why this government invested \$23 million additional dollars to ensure that we have the right supports. That's why this government is working with AHS to make sure that we install power stretchers in all AHS ambulances. We're proud to work with front-line responders and to make sure they have the supports necessary, and we will continue to work to help support them in their mental health journey as well. We've got the side of workers on this side of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Steel and Aluminum Tariffs

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the U.S. government announced new unfair and discriminatory tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum. I've already heard from folks in my

constituency who are deeply concerned about the impacts that these new rules might have on our economy. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what are you doing to fight for Albertans and get these tariffs reversed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We always stand up for Alberta workers and Alberta companies, whether it's licence plates, pipelines, lumber, or steel. President Trump's tariffs are ridiculous, and they're insulting and will hurt workers and families on both sides of the border. We support the federal government approach for strong retaliatory measures and also their commitment to consulting Alberta companies and workers to hear their ideas and concerns. Now, there is a 30-day period which provides the President an opportunity to walk back these dangerous and protectionist measures.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are already seeing stories about the negative impacts these tariffs might have on producers and consumers, to the same minister: what are you doing to advocate for Albertans who might be unfairly impacted by these new, costly increases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immediately on learning about these tariffs, I had a conversation with the CEO of AltaSteel, which is Alberta's largest steel producer. We convened a round-table that afternoon with the largest steel consumers as well to talk about the impacts, not only to the steel industry but, quite frankly, to the livelihoods of other sectors and other families. I can tell you that our government will not stand by as these workers and families and their livelihoods and jobs are put at risk. I can tell you that we're assessing the impacts of these tariffs, and we'll be in constant dialogue with the federal government. Just yesterday I spoke to the Prime Minister to voice Alberta's concerns.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you. Given that construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline is going to be started any day now and given that builders will need an incredible amount of steel throughout the project, again to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: can you confirm whether or not this pipeline will be in fact impacted by these new tariffs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that the tariffs will have no impact on the Trans Mountain pipeline. The majority of steel needed for the pipeline is coming from a plant to the east of us, and the rest is going to be sourced from outside of the U.S. So we're not going to be subject to any of these tariffs. I can tell you that we're working incredibly hard to ensure that this pipeline is built as soon as possible. The Premier has been a steadfast advocate and has said that we will do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built. We know that 15,000 jobs are significant, not only for Albertans but for all Canadians, and we stand behind this project.

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

Hillview Park Condominiums in Fort McMurray

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray's Hillview Park condominium complex was among the many destroyed in the 2016 wildfire. Since then owners have struggled with significant financial hardship and personal challenges as they attempt to rebuild their homes and their lives. Rebuilding has been stalled, but they still have to pay monthly, and they're now faced with new special assessments to pay for what? The owners are getting lost in stonewalling by their own condo board. To the Minister of Service Alberta: we're approaching four years now since the Condominium Property Act was amended, so why in 2018 are condo owners still facing significant barriers to obtaining basic general information or documents?

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, protecting them when they make a purchase, and no purchase is more important than buying a home. That's why our government took action to protect the residents of Fort McMurray from being scammed or gouged. We stationed experienced investigators in Fort McMurray to assist residents during the rebuild phase by providing advice for dealing with contractors and landlords. We continue to work in the community, and we're making sure the home builders and contractors who are taking deposits for their work have proper business licences. We're also working very hard on updates and regulatory amendments and changes to the Condominium Property Act. However, the issue that . . .

2:10

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you. I hope we'll hear the rest of that answer, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister, the Hillview Park condo issue demonstrates why a quasi-judicial condominium dispute tribunal is so desperately needed in Alberta, yet your government has failed these affected owners by not finalizing the regulations to bring such a body into being. Will you quickly establish a condominium dispute tribunal as a much-needed, low-cost way of resolving or preventing some of these issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To complete my earlier answer, I did want to say to the member that this is a legal dispute between Viceroy and Hillview. It's currently before the courts, so we're unable to comment in detail about that particular issue. With respect to the tribunal, we went across the province and consulted with Albertans on the regulations for the Condominium Property Act and heard clearly that there is a strong appetite for a tribunal. We are bringing these out in phases. The next phase is to deal with the relationship and governance of condominium boards, and after that a tribunal is in the plans. Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're four years and counting. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why doesn't the government's postdisaster responsibility to victims include making some kind of pro bono or low-cost legal services available to people whose lives have been totally devastated and cannot afford legal consultation?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I'm aware of what is happening up there, you know, as

the Minister of Service Alberta stated as well. For my part in Municipal Affairs, one of the things that we did up there for the rebuild was put in a pilot program to try to give people more information about builders so they knew beforehand who they were dealing with. We did bring in builder licensing on December 1, 2017, to make sure people understood who was building their house, their contacts, their history, their qualifications to make sure in case something like this happened that they were covered. I mean, we do have warranties, which are after the fact, things like that, but builder licensing . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-West.

Criminal Code of Canada Penalty Provisions

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill C-75, which is being fast-tracked through the House of Commons, purports to modernize Canada's criminal justice system. The proposed changes include watering down sentences for many serious crimes, such as using the date-rape drug and forced marriage, in an effort to reduce crowding in jails. Minister, do you seriously support a plan that allows a court to slap someone on the wrist for these crimes as well as for impaired driving causing bodily harm and leaving Canada to participate in the activities of a terrorist group?

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member has correctly identified, it is within the jurisdiction of the federal Parliament to deal with those sorts of issues in the Criminal Code. For our part, we are doing what we can here in Alberta to ensure that we have the necessary officers in place in order to get the proper cases forward to Crown prosecutors. We're investing in those Crown prosecutors so that they can make the appropriate applications to ensure that individuals who belong in jail stay in jail.

Mr. Ellis: That's interesting, Mr. Speaker, given that in Ottawa last week the federal Justice minister indicated that she held meetings with provincial justice ministers, "all of whom are supportive of the bold reforms" in C-75. Minister, can you confirm the federal Justice minister's statement that you are onboard with the Trudeau government's plan to reduce penalties for abducting a child under the age of 14, disguise with intent, participating in organized crime, advocating for genocide? I could go on and on. Do you actually support these changes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member well knows, discussions that occur at federal-provincial-territorial meetings tend to have certain aspects which are confidential. That being said, justice ministers were able to come together across the country to talk about the issue of Jordan. One of the reforms that was brought forward was reforms to preliminary inquiries. There are a number of other reforms having to do with hybridization of offences. There were a variety of views in the room, and I'm sure I'll have more to say about that in just a moment.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we really just want to know if you agree with the federal minister's statement in Ottawa and given that, you know, this is a revolving-door justice system that is spinning faster and faster all the time, Minister, how can you

support these catch-and-release proposals in the face of Alberta's current rural crime epidemic?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we here in Alberta are focused on those things which are in within our jurisdiction. The province of Alberta has an enormous number of tools at its disposal to ensure that we are addressing the rural crime issue. That's why we're investing in police. That's why we're investing in Crown prosecutors. We're ensuring that we're taking a more proactive approach to crime. We've also been working with a number of organizations like Alberta Citizens on Patrol to ensure that all Albertans who have a great interest in this issue can be invested in making progress, and we are making progress.

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

Physicians' Disciplinary Policies

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health insists that the College of Physicians & Surgeons needs more legislative tools to revoke the licence of Dr. Ismail Taher, who is convicted of sexually assaulting a patient and a nurse, yet three years ago the college revoked the licence of a physician convicted of sexually assaulting three patients, so clearly the college does have the authority to revoke licences for these offences. The irony is that Dr. Taher has now stepped down due to public pressure. Minister, given this information why are you not directing the college to revoke the licence?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. I, too, share concerns around wanting to guarantee that any time anyone goes to a health professional, they know that that professional doesn't have a record and that they wouldn't have a history of abuse. That's why I have worked within my responsibility and my area of rights as the Health minister to meet with the College of Physicians & Surgeons and really push this, because it is a regulatory college and a body that has authority over licensing for their members. It is an area where I don't believe I have the ability to revoke a licence.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the college posts the names of all practising physicians on its website and Dr. Taher is on that list and given that this family physician admitted that he thought his 18-year-old victim's clothing choice was an invitation for him to touch her sexually during an examination, Minister, why are Albertans having to rely on ratemds.com to warn patients away from sexual predators?

Ms Hoffman: Well, certainly those remarks are very concerning. It is never appropriate for anyone to violate anyone's bodily autonomy without their full and active consent, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, when you're in a position as a patient, you aren't in a position to be able to consent, so that is deeply troubling, those remarks. Women and Albertans should feel safe while accessing medical care. When I was made aware of this situation, as the member knows, we ensured that we reached out to the college immediately, wanting to ensure that they moved with the greatest accountability they could for all Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is the problem, that we are hit now with the ability to not be able to tell people that they're safe. Public safety is the issue that's here. Given that the college recently introduced a no-tolerance policy for doctors sexually abusing patients, but the minister claims that the college needs new legislative tools before it can deal with sexual predators, and given that for the sake of public confidence in the health system, no tolerance means that it has to start today, Minister, if the college simply has a lack of tools when it is confronted with sexual abuse, that means nothing has changed, so when are you going to step in?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Again, this was very troubling. We want to ensure that all disciplinary action is made available for Albertans. We're going to expand the time limits, and we've worked with the college to make some progress on that. Some jurisdictions are ahead of Alberta because they have been addressing issues over the past number of years, including the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, who post criminal convictions for doctors and also keep disciplinary decisions on their website longer than Alberta. Ontario has recently taken legislative steps to prevent sexual abuse by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act. These are some of the tools the college wants, and I'm going to work with them to make . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Alexander First Nation Supportive Living Grant

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in light of his member's statement I would ask the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert to pay special attention to my question today. On January 19, 2016, a letter was sent to the Alexander First Nation from the current Health minister confirming the approval of a \$1.2 million ASLI grant for expansion of the Keechewkamik home. Disabled residents were removed from their homes so renovations could begin. Almost two and a half years later the residents are still displaced. Minister, why have you not released the funds as promised?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

2:20

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very happy to follow up with the member opposite with regard to his specific concerns and with the local MLA as well. It's certainly our intent to make sure that there are as many long-term care beds and supportive living beds as possible for the people of this province and that we keep people as close to home as possible as well, including on-reserve, especially where we have willing partners. I know the department has been working closely with the grant recipients, and we look forward to being able to update the House very soon.

Mr. Hanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister met with council in January 2017 and assured them that funds would be released by March 2017 and given that the government of Alberta sent a letter in September 2017 confirming an increase to the grant to \$1.4 million, Minister, you state in your letters how pleased you are to be able to respond to the supportive living needs of vulnerable Albertans, allowing them to age in their communities, much as what was said in the statement today. Why have you not released the promised funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to follow up with regard to the specifics. I think we have a proven track record working with you, hon. member. I certainly have delivered on the dialysis beds in Lac La Biche, something that Conservative governments failed to do for many, many years. I welcome the hon. member and all members to contact my office directly and be able to problem solve these kinds of things. On the floor of the House is certainly a challenging place to do that, but I do understand that there is some back and forth with legal and with other folks within the department and within the nation to make sure that the funds can be appropriately released. It is a complicated process, but I'll be happy to look into further details in a respectful way.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for that answer. Given that the people living in this home have been removed to allow for renovations, which were started but stalled due to the lack of funding, over two years and waiting, Minister, council is here in the Chamber. Will you agree to meet with them today and come up with a solution? This has gone on long enough. And bring your chequebook.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks so much for the gotcha politics, Mr. Speaker. This is always fun when members in one breath ask for us to make cuts and in the next breath ask us to bring our chequebook. We are absolutely committed to working in partnership with First Nations, with local leaders around our province to make sure that we get beds built in the right communities to support the right care in the right place. Certainly, moving forward on projects on-reserve is a deep priority of mine, and I've made that very clear to my department. We'd be happy to troubleshoot, and I'd be very happy to meet, of course, with the folks that are here. Doing the "come today and bring your chequebook" is not exactly the most diplomatic way, but obviously I will meet with the constituents.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, Royal Bank's recent provincial outlook confirmed what Albertans already know. We are worse off today than when the NDP took power. One indicator is called the discomfort index, a combination of unemployment and inflation. Alberta's discomfort index when the NDP took office was 7. By 2016 it had risen to 8.4, and this year it's rising to 9. To the minister: why do you continue to push critical investment out of Alberta, resulting in Alberta families and communities being worse off?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I think he's a little confused because over the past year over 90,000 new full-time jobs have been created, mostly in the private sector. As well, there are a number of other indicators. Our GDP growth is up. We led the country last year with 4.9 per cent growth. We're on track to lead the country again this year. Our manufacturing numbers are up. Our exports are up. Wages are up. Retail is up. Wholesale is up. Housing construction is up. EI numbers are down. Alberta recorded the fastest year-over-

year decline in the number of beneficiaries among all provinces, down 26 per cent.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Given that a recent Fraser Institute report found that before 2015 Albertans were each paying \$58 annually to service the province's interest, an Albertan in 2020 will pay \$655 in NDP interest, and hard-working Albertans have received longer wait times, six credit downgrades, and decades now of debt and interest, to the minister: Your wild spending has resulted in a 1,000 per cent increase in interest costs per capita. Yes, that is up, too. What do you have to say to hard-working Albertans who must pay this back?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what I would say to these Albertans is: look at the record of the Conservative Party over there. They had increases to the operating lines of 10 per cent some years. We're flattening that out. What wouldn't help Albertans out is the flat tax that that side keeps talking about. It's really exposed for what it is, a handout that benefits only the rich in this province, and all of us pay for it. Why don't they talk about that, how the flat tax would hurt every Albertan except the 1 per cent, which are their friends?

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's current annual interest of over \$2 billion doesn't help anyone out. Given that the same institute report found that by 2020 Alberta's ever-increasing interest payments per capita will surpass British Columbia's and be 70 per cent of Ontario's and all the while services Albertans receive diminish, to the minister: why have you reduced Alberta's future prosperity, destroyed investment, and jeopardized every single priority that Alberta families and communities care deeply about?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, on this side we're carefully and prudently reducing the deficit without making the reckless cuts that the UCP Party would make across Alberta. They would fire thousands of teachers and nurses and leave us all without the programs and services we need. The Leader of the Opposition has no record to stand on as he was part of six straight deficit budgets, the largest of which was \$56 billion in just one year alone; \$145 billion to our national debt: that's what he added.

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

Workforce Education and Training

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear from many constituents who were laid off two or three years ago that they haven't been able to find work or, if they do find a job, it doesn't use their skills. They want to retrain but can't find short-term programs that will get them back to work quickly to pay their bills. What government strategy ensures that education programs offered by community and employer collaborations are supported through economic diversification, coal community transition, and other programs to increase opportunities for people to get back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the very timely question, an important question. There are a number of initiatives that our government has been rolling out through not only my department but also the Ministry of Labour and others to help especially workers, whether it's in retraining,

developing the right tools and skills to be able to go back into the workforce as well as a number of initiatives to support our job creators, our businesses around the province to get back on their feet. We know that small business is the economic engine of this province. Our government has been steadfast in our commitment, and we will continue to look at ways to support workers through a variety of tools moving forward.

Ms McPherson: Given that Rainforest Alberta and Calgary Economic Development have worked with employers to create a program called EvolveU that meets employers' needs for work-ready developers now and given that there is currently no government funding to address the immediate needs of the tech sector for full stack developers, not coders, will the Minister of Advanced Education commit to covering all or part of the tuition for innovative programs such as EvolveU that have been designed to address the ongoing shortage of tech workers, as identified by Amazon and others?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, this Legislature has before it Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act, which commits to creating 3,000 new technology spaces in postsecondary institutions. In our budget that we brought forward, we committed millions of dollars to funding those spaces and funding the short-term training programs that the member referred to in her previous question. As far as the details go for providing additional funding, I advise the hon. member to stay tuned.

Ms McPherson: Given that EvolveU is a great example of GBA plus focused program development that is intentional about inclusivity and given that speaking to underrepresented communities in tech reveals that they have the largest hurdles to overcome and given that diversity offers a distinct competitive advantage to anyone looking to diversify in export, why have there been no reported metrics and no tabling of gender-based analysis of legislation passed over the last three years?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too long women in our province have faced barriers to work, unequal pay, and high levels of violence. This is no different when we look at the STEM sector. In fact, there are additional barriers to women getting involved in the STEM sector, and that's why we include GBA plus analysis in all of our ministries and all of our departments. There is an incredible number of examples where GBA plus has contributed to the work being done, including the legislation brought forward by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, which includes additional incentives and credits for hiring diverse populations of individuals into exactly those STEM sectors.

Thank you.

2:30 Air Ambulance Service in Peace River

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, previously I asked the Minister of Health about an incident that occurred at the Peace River airport on April 29 where a medevac plane was stuck in the mud for almost two hours. The minister disputes this claim and has said, "I'm sick of the mudslinging in this House." Ironical. Given that the documents I tabled last week demonstrate a delay of almost two hours, would the minister like to rescind her comment and admit that the

procurement process for our air ambulance service has resulted in an actual reduction in the services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are getting an upgraded and modernized air ambulance system, and this means newer, faster aircraft equipped with the latest technology. CanWest Air charters began operating in 8 of 10 base communities on September 1, 2017. What I did say was that the air ambulance I believe was stuck for approximately 10 minutes – the hon. member said two hours – and that it was considered a stable transfer, nonemergency, so a new air ambulance was sent rather than risking anything by flying with the old one. I'm simply putting the facts . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, given that the air ambulance service provider did not meet AHS service obligations on April 29 by not departing within 30 minutes of the transfer, what did the minister do to hold the provider accountable for this breach of their contract?

Ms Hoffman: Again, hon. member, it was deemed not be an emergency transfer. That's why the backup plane was brought in rather than departing with a plane that had been in the mud. Certainly, if we want to enforce contracts and if it had been an emergency, they would have been able to do that, but what was deemed better by the experts in the community was to send the backup plane rather than fly the one that had been in the mud more recently. Patient care will always be the number one driver in making sure that we have safe transfers. Safe transfers are our priority and making sure that happens in all parts of the province.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that if the incident on April 29 was actually an emergency, there could have been life-threatening consequences for the patient involved, will the Minister of Health ensure that this type of incident does not happen again and patient care is not at risk for residents of not just northern Alberta but all of Alberta?

Ms Hoffman: Just to clarify – I may have misheard – the transfer was seen as nonemergent. It was seen as a routine, nonemergency transfer, and that's why the second plane was called rather than flying out with the first one. Of course, if there's anytime an emergency, first responders would work as urgently as possible to ensure as quick a departure as possible. This is why we are grateful that we have an upgraded fleet that's got the most efficient, effective tools on board, and we will continue to work with Alberta Health Services to ensure that all parts of the province have the very best air ambulance service available.

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

Supportive Living Accommodations for Rural Seniors

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of Seniors' Week I would like to inform the House about a remarkable constituent of mine. Her name is Zoe Bleau. Zoe has been a resident of Bonnyville for 46 years. In those five decades she has made many contributions to our community and has raised seven children. Now, however, Zoe is at a later stage in her life. She is 86 and is dealing with many issues that come with age. Zoe has been waiting nine months to move into the Bonnylodge. She has been bumped down the list, being told that she exceeds the income threshold. To the minister: is it fair that Zoe will most likely never get into this local facility?

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We believe that all seniors should have a safe and affordable place to call home. I can certainly look into the particular details of this issue, but I can assure you that it's a priority of our government to make sure that seniors have the supports they need to live in a dignified manner. In the next question I will expand on the investment we have made so far.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that Zoe has been made to wait because she exceeds the \$28,000 per year priority threshold and given that Zoe's doctors have written that she is in immediate need of the kind of care that Bonnylodge can provide and given that Zoe has previously written the government about this issue, will the minister please consider Zoe's individual circumstances, consider waiving the income threshold, and take action necessary to immediately place her in the Bonnylodge, ensuring that she has adequate, medically necessary care?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I mentioned, I will look into the specifics of this issue.

We are investing in seniors' programs to make sure that seniors have the support they need. In just the last three years we have invested in affordable housing to make sure that there are housing options available. We have made sure that seniors have access to the Alberta seniors' benefits. We have invested almost \$3 billion in seniors' programs to make sure that they have the supports they need.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've provided the minister a hand-delivered document that was from this constituent and given that Zoe's family has been told that the income guidelines are the only barrier to the admission and given that the staff of the seniors ministry told the family that she had the choice between being safe or being near family members and friends and given that this sets a dangerous precedent for many aging Albertans who may have pension income or the like, will the minister review this kind of situation that Zoe finds herself in and commit to taking immediate action so that she can age safely, in dignity, near her family?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. I do want to clarify that lodge living is still independent living and that home-care services are usually what provides additional wraparound health supports. If there are specific questions with regard to individuals receiving health services, I'd be very happy to respond to this on a health component. Folks who do live in a lodge are living independently still. They do have their meals provided and their housekeeping provided, but they are still independently living. If it's about health care services, hon. member, I'd be happy to discuss this, whether it's home care or whether it's about moving into a facility that has additional supports. These are some of the options that are available.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Yao: Since this government took power, the Health budget has continued to grow, and so has the government's boasting about hiring front-line workers to, quote, improve the standard of care for Albertans. In fact, Mr. Speaker, AHS has grown by approximately 8,000 employees, and we're still waiting for a response from AHS on how many of those are front-line workers.

What is disappointing is that wait times have steadily increased. Hip replacements, knee replacements, cataract surgeries have all risen a month in wait times since this group has come into government. Why have these wait times dramatically increased under this Health minister's watch in the last three years?

Ms Hoffman: Again, Mr. Speaker, anytime anyone is waiting for health care services, we want to provide better, more efficient, more effective local services as close to home as possible. What wouldn't help with that is deep, ideological cuts and moving towards privatization and two-tiered health care. That certainly would hurt everyday folks living in this province. While the member has identified a number of areas where there is still more work to be done, I have to say that we are making significant progress and reducing wait times in a number of areas, including GI in Calgary. Essentially, there are zero wait times now to see a GI specialist, and that's certainly a good thing, and we're going to continue moving to address wait times in other areas as well.

Mr. Yao: The failures of this ministry are not just limited to things like hip and cataract surgeries, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is a very real issue in today's society. Timely mental health supports for children are crucial for their development. In Edmonton only one in four children got in to see a therapist within 30 days. To the Minister of Health. The federal government has budgeted a substantial amount of money to the provinces specific to mental health, yet AHS's own statistics do not lie. Why have Albertans, especially those most vulnerable, been stuck in longer and longer health care queues since your government took over?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that for any family that is reaching out asking for help, I want to honour that fact. I am so grateful that they're asking for help. We've done a lot over the last few years, I think, to address the stigma around mental health and create a more compassionate, caring society. Folks are asking for help at greater levels. That's why we're increasing funding to greater levels. We've increased the funding for school interventions by 50 per cent this year alone. That is certainly a step in the right direction. Is there more to be done? Absolutely. Is cutting 20 per cent from the Health budget the solution? Absolutely not. We need to invest in these families and make sure that children get the supports they need.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it's a question of outcomes for Albertans, not just spending. This government's justification for increasing the Health budget is to hire more front-line workers. Despite the increase of \$2 billion in the Health budget since you got elected, wait times have not improved and outcomes for Albertans are deteriorating. To the Health Minister: rather than deflecting, will you take ownership of the irrefutably deteriorating wait time performance measures?

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, in a number of areas the wait times have improved. As I mentioned, in Calgary, for example, GI

wait times are essentially eliminated. That is nothing to laugh at, hon. members. Those are people who are not living in pain anymore because this government invested to make their lives better. I'm proud of that. What I am also proud of is that we stopped regressive cuts that were being proposed by the members opposite. Is demand going up in a number of areas? Yes. Is there more need for investment in these areas? Absolutely. And 20 per cent cuts and laughing at people who are in pain is no way to do that, hon. member.

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

Women's Political Participation

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the recent UCP convention a member of that party and a former MLA in this House suggested that it was humiliating and patronizing that Executive Council currently has more women than men. She implied that women who currently serve as ministers were apparently, unlike any men who had served in those roles before, appointed merely for their gender rather than their qualifications and experience. Now, if true, that's very troubling for the Albertans who depend on them to govern our province. So on behalf of the Premier, to the Minister of Status of Women: can you please clarify the policy of our government in choosing who will serve on Executive Council?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the important question. Our government is taking concrete steps to make life better, fairer, and safer for Alberta's women. The Conservatives have the wrong priorities. They would make life harder for women in Alberta if given the chance. You know, it's not difficult to name a gender-balanced cabinet when you have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to our members' qualifications, and because of the strong women's presence in our caucus and cabinet women have been at the heart of all our decision-making. That's why we're investing in affordable child care, making historic investments in funding for women's shelters and sexual assault services, and introducing legislation like Bill 9 that ensures ...

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the same individual derided the suggestion that women face economic, social, or other barriers to choosing to run for political office as socialist crap and given that the former interim leader of the federal Conservatives suggested that the issue is simply one of women not being invited to get involved or offering them mentorship, to the Minister of Status of Women: have you considered directing any of your grant funding to supporting such a unique and novel initiative?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Increasing the democratic participation of women is an issue that our government takes very seriously. That's why we launched programs like the ready for her initiative and supported community-driven initiatives like Ask Her in Calgary. We also gave grants to a number of organizations like the Altview Foundation for Gender Variant and Sexual Minorities, where we provided a grant for conferences to empower and mentor women

and gender-diverse persons with their political goals; the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre, where we gave \$50,000 for a program to encourage indigenous women to run for office or be active in politics; and the IAAW, where we provided \$100,000 for the development of a strategy ...

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that at this same convention the former interim leader of the federal Conservative Party derided thinking of women as tokens, saying that they don't want any special treatment, and given that the former interim leader of the Wildrose suggested that quotas to recruit women are condescending and paternalistic, to the Minister of Finance: given that the number of women on Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions has gone from 32 per cent to 50 per cent, can you clarify how our government's policy has accomplished this without condescending to or insulting women?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To answer that, let me take you back to a time when Conservative Premiers with their aura of power reigned supreme from their sky palaces, a time when only Conservative friends and insiders were eligible for board and executive roles and were handed taxpayer-funded perks like golf club memberships. Today we make appointments based on what you know, not who you know. Government appointments are now posted online and open to all Albertans. We are putting people with the right skills into those roles, and we are proud to have achieved gender parity on our boards, just like we have in cabinet. That's something we're proud of.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll begin again in 30 seconds.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Cyr: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I have several documents I'd like to table. The first one is regarding the question that I had earlier about a request from an 86-year-old constituent that I'll quote here. It says, "What is a reasonable time frame to await placement while at risk? I think that 9 months is too long!" This is obviously problematic.

Then what I have are two letters, one from an ADM from the government, from John Thomson. He says in this, "Bonnylodge is currently at capacity and has an extensive waitlist. The waitlist is based on priority of need and, unfortunately, it is not possible to expedite your mother's placement on the waitlist." It's clearly because of an income threshold, not because of need. Her response was that when she had contacted the ministry, they didn't even have a file for them even though she had sent a letter and a hand-delivered one was given by myself to the minister – that original letter; sorry.

I have three doctors that have written recommendations that she be admitted into the local lodge. Again, this is for the safety of a senior who is 86 years old that wants to reside near family and friends in a place that she has resided in for over 46 years. I also have a picture of where she was injured. It is a terrible set of pictures where you see that she is all bruised from a fall that she had had. This is a clear reason why we need to really help this ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, sir.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of all of the correspondence between the Health minister and Alexander First Nation on their project.

Thank you.

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 Jansen, Minister of Infrastructure, responses to questions raised by MLA McPherson, hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Hose Hill, and Dr. Starke, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, Ministry of Infrastructure 2018-19 main estimates debate.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 18 Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate June 5: Mr. McIver]

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

Mr. McIver: How much do I have left?

The Speaker: Five minutes left to speak.

Mr. McIver: Five minutes left. Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to continue on Bill 18. As I say, it's the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. For the most part the bill truly is housekeeping, and since the government put time allocation and limited debate on the hiring of the Election Commissioner, I think it's important to remind the House that the process of hiring an independent officer that oversees an election should be the most nonpartisan piece of business that this House does. It should be a place where all parties should come together, where the government should actually do their best to look at the opposition – we get it. The government has the majority, and they can do whatever they want, rightly. I'm not saying that it's wrong. That's the definition of democracy. They can do what they want because they have the most votes in the House, but they need to have respect for the core principles of democracy.

2:50

The core principles would be that it should appear to Albertans that there is a fair, unbiased process for running an election, and of course that would include the fair, unbiased process for hiring those officers charged with the refereeing, if you will, the elections, monitoring the fairness of the elections, making sure the rules governing the elections are enforced in a way that's even-handed towards all parties and not stacking the deck for one side or another. I have no doubt that the commissioner hired will do that or do his best to do that.

The problem is that the government has put the commissioner in a bad place by not going about the hiring process in a way that is unbiased and in a way that values the opinions of the opposition parties. They didn't do it in a way that looks fair. They didn't do it in a way that seeks consensus. They didn't do it in a way that looks

to anybody that measures the government's actions against the principles of democracy. They did it in a way that is open to criticism, and that is a shame.

Mr. Speaker, this is a House where we can disagree on a lot of things, and indeed that is our job. But when the government takes one of the core things that we shouldn't disagree on and turns the process into a partisan one, then of course we are left with questions, not the least of which is at this point the sunshine list, the fact that this adds the sunshine list. But what's interesting here and disappointing in the legislation is that Albertans won't find out the pay rate of their new Election Commissioner until after the next general election probably.

There you go, Mr. Speaker. The government had an opportunity to get it right. They did something else. They didn't get it right. They limited debate because they didn't want to hear about how they didn't get it right. And then when they found out that they got it wrong again and didn't get the commissioner on the sunshine list in legislation, they attempted to sneak that little detail into a statutes amendment act, which is in my view just one more admission that they didn't get it right. I'm happy to stand up and remind the government of that. All Albertans should be aware of that, and all Albertans should be very disappointed in this government and the way that they have added this section into Bill 18.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, talking about a house-keeping bill is one of those things that, clearly, isn't probably a lightning rod, if you will, for many of our constituents. But I will say that the last time I had spoken on Bill 18, I had several questions that I have not heard answers to, and if I have, then I apologize. One of them was the fact that on Bill 18, if we go – the name of the bill is Statutes Amendment Act, 2018; again, this is a thrilling name for a bill, here – to

(2) The heading "Fair Trading Act" preceding section 1 is struck out and the heading "Consumer Protection Act" is substituted.

What we're doing here is more or less renaming an existing act, it appears to me. I'm not sure what we had as a problem, when it came to the fact that the Fair Trading Act seems to be very clear on what it was for. It was to promote consumer protection if you will.

Now, I do know that that's what they're naming it, Consumer Protection Act. Were there stakeholders out there that had said that they are unclear what the Fair Trading Act stood for? And if there were stakeholders out there, when it comes to this Fair Trading Act, what concerns exactly did they have that would actually reinforce this need for the government to want to change this act's name? What are the advantages? Is it bringing clarity to what is inside of the bill? Has the government done something that clearly has changed the intent of the act to something different?

Now, the Fair Trading Act is pretty straightforward, in my opinion. It appears, too, that this renaming of the act could be used to promote that the government has actually done something. I would say that renaming an act isn't actually doing anything other than potentially misleading Albertans into the understanding that this government is out to protect them. I'm not saying that they're not. Obviously, I believe that every member of this Chamber is out to protect the public, but we do need to be cautious that we're not promoting that we're doing something just by changing its name. It would be like me taking off my Ford nameplate, putting on there GMC, and saying that it's now a GMC truck, going out and saying to everybody that it's a brand new truck. Clearly, that would be misleading. If that is not what the government is intending to do,

then I apologize, but it does seem that what we're trying to do here is to more or less tell Albertans that this government is out to do consumer protection, which is admirable, I have to say. Again, I believe every member here – I don't want to speak for everybody, but I'll speak for myself and my caucus – is out to actually protect consumers.

Now, another one that I had as a concern is on page 2 of the bill. What we're doing here is that the Alberta Corporate Tax Act is amended by this section. What we're seeing here is that the government is more or less adding the new Election Commissioner into the Alberta Corporate Tax Act. I had questioned before: are these powers that this new position actually needs? This is not something that is to be taken lightly, to be going out and just suddenly empowering an independent office with being able to go in and see corporate tax records. What exactly is this new position? What are they going to be doing with access through the Alberta Corporate Tax Act?

The way I can really look at it at this point is that corporate donations and union donations are exempt from donating to a nomination race, to a campaign, a leadership race. So when we've disqualified these corporations from contributing or creating an active role because we've actually brought forward third-party limitations as well, what happens here is that there's a question about why exactly it is that this new position, the Election Commissioner, needs access to corporate records. Now, I'm not saying that it's an unreasonable thing that the government is doing, but I want to understand what it is that they're trying to accomplish with that. I think that's a reasonable question. Why does this new position need that access? Can the existing CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, not accomplish this through his access as well? The Chief Electoral Officer has access through the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, and he's able to go in and do the things that he needs to do there, so we do have a mechanism for ensuring that Alberta corporations are not donating inappropriately.

Again, it seems that there's a lot of duplication when it comes to the roles of this new position with our Chief Electoral Officer, and it's this duplication that is something that we need to acknowledge as a consistent problem within the government of Alberta. We need to find efficiencies, and we need to ensure that those efficiencies are brought forward because we are ultimately accountable to the taxpayer. We are ultimately trying to make sure that when every dollar of taxpayer money is spent, it is spent responsibly.

My question, again, on this next one here is: why is it that we have a new independent agency getting this access? Is it going to be something that is problematic later on, in the future, because we're going to find that we have competing roles between these two independent agencies? That is very troublesome, when you've got one agency competing with another agency for the same resources. My concern, as always, is: are we ensuring that we have an absolutely fair electoral process?

3:00

When we have the government getting up and saying that, you know, we're trying to pick on this new position, it clearly is not the case. I just want to understand why we're giving them that power. It seems that they're duplicating something that they don't need to. They're deeming this as a miscellaneous change or a statutes amendment act, so they're kind of sneaking this in and hoping that nobody asks the question so that they don't have to answer it.

When we've got this new position, the new Election Commissioner, in place, they're going to be going around and potentially going into areas where they're actually, maybe, not allowed to go. I don't understand. If the Election Commissioner

gets a complaint, just because he has this act, it doesn't mean that he actually has the authority to investigate that.

Now, the problem here is that when we looked at the job description for this new position, it was very vague, so I really am unsure what the new Election Commissioner is going to do. I would say that that was one of my concerns when we brought it forward. This is a position that could potentially change the direction of an entire election because of the fact that we have a conflicting role, potentially, between the two independent agencies.

Clearly, I want to ensure that we're not duplicating with the money that our taxpayers are giving us. But we also need to make sure that the goal of bringing transparency and reliability to our electoral process isn't impaired by having duplication. Normally what happens when you have duplication within a system is that the two systems create holes in areas that weren't there before. Let's say that one thinks that one is doing it, and the other one is thinking that the other is doing it. And guess what? Nobody is doing it. A lot of times what happens is that the thing that is being missed or the gap in the system is usually very costly for the independent department or that group, so then in the end it's better for them to step back and say: let the other guy do it.

Now, we have seen that in other places. A good example would be our school system. I have a nephew who, as many of you know, has autism, a wonderful young man. I think he'll be an incredible Albertan when he gets a little older. What happened here was that we had three different organizations: the school board, FCSS, I believe, and a special board for children with disabilities. All three of them were pointing to each other, saying that his specific problem, which was language, being able to speak to others, was each other's problem, somebody else's. All three of them were pointing in different directions. None of them were taking responsibility for the fact that, in the end, my nephew wasn't getting any help. Clearly, there's duplication within that system. Clearly, it's not working the way that you would hope.

This is where my concern is when it comes to the new position that we've got, the Election Commissioner. If there's duplication there, are we going to be creating gaps that were never there before because the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, would have automatically taken responsibility for it because he was the only one there and he would've been the only one held accountable? When something bad happens, are we going to end up with two independent offices pointing at each other, saying: it's his fault or her fault? Clearly, that is not good for us. That's not good for Alberta's well-being because we depend on an impartial, reasonable, accurate election going forward. This is clearly something that we need to be cautious of when we're doing anything with that.

Again, I will get back to these miscellaneous changes. Does this new commissioner require access to the Alberta Corporate Tax Act?

Now, I will also ask the question – and, you know, I probably am going to get an answer that I'm expecting – that I don't understand why we are putting the Election Commissioner as a subclause to the Chief Electoral Officer. Does this matter? Does this mean that one office is subservient to another office? I see in other examples that we've got in here that that does happen with other commissions. That's been pointed out to me. But this is an important point. It's good that we clarify that if it is under the independent office of the Chief Electoral Officer, then really what we've done is created an office within an office, which is going to cause us immense grief because then we're going to have two offices, one trying to give direction to another office, which is not the intent of this House, I believe, that they're trying to create two independent offices.

Now, again, when it comes to this legislation, I will definitely lean to what the government is saying. If they say that it's not what their hope was and that it is not what that means, that's good to know. In the end, all I'm looking for are clear, concise, on-the-record responses from the government should a judge ever need to go back and look over these debates. Because in the end, it matters. It matters that we're clear and concise whenever we're discussing legislation what the intent of the government was at the time, not what the judge is trying to interpret that the government means.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise in this House to speak to legislation that affects all Albertans. Today is no exception, of course, as we speak to Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Now, Bill 18 was originally intended as a miscellaneous statutes amendment act, but it does make minor wording changes to a number of different statutes. The proposed amendments are administrative, of course, or technical in nature, certainly not complex, not intended to deal with any controversial matter, and Bill 18 doesn't authorize the direct spending of money and does not create offences.

You know, Mr. Speaker, for the most part, I think this is a good act. I think that traditionally statutes amendment acts generally are good pieces of legislation. I think that probably most governments find that they need to do something like this as far as amendments are concerned and that it is something that is actually required now and then.

I believe that in the brief I looked at, the following departments have legislation included in Bill 18: Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, and Service Alberta. Members of the Legislative Offices Committee would like to highlight the legislative change required to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. This change is necessary to allow the public disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary, which I'll speak to later.

3:10

The bill also deals with some pieces of legislation: A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, the Alberta Human Rights Act, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, the Auditor General Act, the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Consumer Protection Act, and the Election Act. I believe also that the Electronic Transactions Act is thrown in there, the Employment Standards Code, and the Financial Administration Act.

Usually with a bill like a statutes amendment act things go in the bill and they go by without too much discussion. Of course, most of the things in the bill are traditionally housekeeping measures, responsibilities of the government, perhaps a misspelled word or two within some of the documents, like I would have just mentioned there. Things like that. But it kind of looks to me like the government has chosen to slide a few things into the bill that they may not necessarily have wanted – I'll put it this way: maybe they didn't want the opposition to talk about anymore, kind of hoping that the bill would go through the House with some of that content not talked about. But because some of the content that I would suggest perhaps the government does not want to hear anymore about – understood – is the content that the Official Opposition talked about at length during our sitting last month, I think that it should indeed be talked about before Bill 18 passes.

I just want to make it clear that I and my colleagues will be supporting Bill 18, but because of the content of one particular issue, I think that many of my colleagues prior to today and today will probably be saying a few words to that particular issue, just as I'm about to do.

I guess I'd like to address the fact that I did notice that the Election Commissioner, the new position, is part of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. I do remember rather well that government MLAs were rather, I guess I would say, sanctimonious when we suggested the need to publicly disclose the salary of the Election Commissioner last month. They certainly had a bit of a holier-than-thou attitude when we suggested that the new Election Commissioner's salary be publicly disclosed. You know, Mr. Speaker, the government side of the House almost – well, not almost. The government side actually took the position that asking them to provide the salary of this new position, the Election Commissioner, publicly was some kind of an insult to the commissioner himself. The government was somehow appalled that the Official Opposition would actually ask for the salary of a new position of this government to be publicly disclosed.

Mr. Speaker, I think that you will remember that in this Chamber there has been a lot of discussion about the Election Commissioner position and what, indeed, that position was getting paid. The question was why the salary for the new position couldn't be posted on the sunshine list. That was an issue that the Official Opposition talked about in this Chamber several times last month. We truly do believe that there is a need for transparency on that sunshine list. We've come to that decision in this House, you will recall, that everyone in this House determined that part of having a good government was to disclose people's wages that reach a fairly substantial level, I guess I would say, and that those salaries would be added to the sunshine list. The Official Opposition wanted the Election Commissioner's wages to be disclosed and brought forward immediately so that the public could see just how much this person was going to be paid. Now, of course, we all know that the government did not support that idea.

Now, as we look at Bill 18, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act has been added to this bill, the Statutes Amendment Act, which just happens to include discussion about the Election Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, I think we all remember the discussions about the individual's salary and the fact that the government didn't want to make it public until some time in the future. In fact, all members kind of got to learn a little more about this position as the discussion continued, how the committee recommended his hiring and the government members, that held the majority, pushed that idea through that same committee. I believe that the members of the House will remember that four members that sat as Official Opposition on the committee, that actually sit on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, produced a minority report that explained all of the issues pretty much that I've just explained here and then some.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to remember that my good friend from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock proposed an amendment to Government Motion 16. I think the date of that proposed amendment was May 1. Now, you remember Government Motion 16. It was the motion that the government brought forward which recommended hiring Mr. Lorne Gibson as the Election Commissioner. I recall the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock telling the House how the opposition members of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices fought the appointment of Mr. Gibson at the search committee level for various reasons and then determined that some additional opposition to the government motion should be added when indeed Government Motion 16 came to the House.

As I said when I spoke to this last time, I understand that members of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices have been involved with a number of search committees over a period of time, and in all of those cases all members had a very good working relationship and, most importantly, were in all of those instances able to come to unanimous consent, unanimous support. So if you consider the Auditor General position or the Ombudsman position, those were all passed unanimously, the decision of who that person would be. I just believe that there was some good communication between all party members, that all the voices at the table were heard, and there was more of a robust discussion that led to a unanimous decision.

What happened with the proposal to appoint this election officer was a little more partisan, as our friend from Westlock – what is it?

The Speaker: Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. Schneider: There you go. You've said it more times than I have.

The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock – there you go – told us in the House of discussions that were held in the standing committee, certainly not discussions that were held in camera, but in discussions that they had with Mr. Gibson during his interview on the fact that he may have somewhat of a bias against the government of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, you'll recall that the reason for that bias was the fact that the contract that Mr. Gibson had with the Alberta government was allowed to expire in 2009. Subsequently Mr. Gibson determined to sue the government of Alberta for wrongful dismissal. You'll recall that when that case got to court, the judge determined that the government of the day had indeed not dismissed or fired Mr. Gibson, as today's government would like everyone to believe, but that, rather, his contract had simply been allowed to expire. This is something that happens in business. It happens all over the place. Those are actually two different things.

Now, this government has gone to a lot of work to see that this same individual is now hired again by the government of Alberta to fill a newly created position called the Election Commissioner. You know, it seems that, Mr. Speaker, actions like this almost seem to be becoming habitual for today's Alberta government.

3:20

Just last week my colleague from the outstanding riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills asked a question just about every day during question period about a person that quit their job with the government of Alberta and within 48 hours was immediately rehired by the government of Alberta even though he is working and living outside of the province and being paid a five- or six-figure salary. We're not exactly sure about that one because their job description certainly hasn't been made public. There are a lot of things that we don't know about that particular job and its salary, and I commend the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for the good work that he did on that file.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that's just another faux pas, it seems, of a government that hasn't dotted its i's and crossed its t's. Albertans that talk to us are wondering how the government is spending their money and what benefit they are getting for the money that is being spent. They are concerned and rightfully so, it seems.

What we do know, Mr. Speaker, is that the amendment to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act was indeed necessary. We know that Bill 18 is bringing the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act into the Statutes Amendment Act and is indeed absolutely necessary because, you see, the Government House Leader on the 8th made it clear to the House

that he'd actually provided inaccurate information to the House with regard to the public disclosure of this officer's salary. He admitted on that day that legislative changes would indeed be required in order to make that happen. You know what? Everybody makes mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes.

I remember speaking to Motion 16 in the House last month. I remember the whole discussion that revolved around this new position and, certainly, the salary of the position. We know that this Election Commissioner position is a position that was just newly created by the government. We also know that the job this new Election Commissioner will be doing is already, for the most part, being done by the Chief Electoral Officer. Now, the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Glen Resler, reminded the committee while he was there to report to the committee that he had not had a chance to comment on the bill that actually created the position of Election Commissioner, so you can imagine how the Chief Electoral Officer may have been feeling.

Now, I think it would be fair to say that the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta has been held in high regard throughout this province. He's done his job very ethically. I think there would be not too many that would be able to challenge that statement. He has served the electoral process in Alberta well. Now, he stated, when he was asked to present to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices in regard to election investigations, that he actually had no issues handling current complaints that came into his office in regard to investigations, that he was able to handle all of the complaints in his regular duties as Chief Electoral Officer. So just to recap that, the Chief Electoral Officer made it clear that he had no problems or issues.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the Member for Little Bow under 29(2)(a)?

Do any other members wish to speak?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned June 5]

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

Mr. Ellis: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here to speak on third reading of Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill is proposing, of course, to use a mixture of incentives, also called taxpayers' money, to encourage diversification in Alberta's tech sector. Alberta's United Conservatives do not support this type of approach. What we see with Bill 2 and why we are not supporting it is that the NDP is trying to put a Band-Aid on cuts created by the sharp knife of the carbon tax and all of their, you know, other fiscal policies that have not really, necessarily, had such a warm reception from many of the public-sector folks that I've spoken to.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 2 is another one of those pieces of legislation the NDP proposes because it continues to err with its economy-killing policies. So what does it do? In typical fashion it plays the game of trying to make winners by offering a suite of tax credits in this particular bill. Albertans have never liked that approach. In fact, as a fourth-generation Albertan and somebody who has spoken to many business owners in Calgary-West, that certainly isn't an approach that they appear to like or enjoy. You know, they see right through it, the folks that I've been speaking with. What they want

is, of course, a strong economy, an economy that is freed from the chains of the poor fiscal policies such as the carbon tax.

Let me point out an example of the problem with Bill 2, which it purports to be fixing. This proposed legislation continues the Alberta investor tax credit, yet that targeted tax credit left \$1.4 million on the table, Mr. Speaker. This might indicate that the government has had a lower than anticipated interest in this tax credit because it is narrow and very sector specific. Another possibility is that the government has not been able to efficiently and effectively distribute this money to investors.

Clearly, there are questions about this tax credit and how it's performing. Why serve up millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds before understanding if the sector needs that extra bit of offering? As we've, you know, seen over and over again, Mr. Speaker, this government has not provided any analytics to show whether it's even performing as it had anticipated, perhaps because it didn't set any benchmarks to begin with. Benchmarks, of course, are very important when putting policies forward. That, too, unfortunately, is typical of this government.

The UCP members tried in the standing committee on economic development to convince this government to do an economic impact study on the carbon tax, which, of course, is very, very important. It certainly made sense and could have warded off bills like this one that just offer a fix for something that needs axing, not fixing, and that is, of course, the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. As the government raises the carbon tax, which the NDP is happy to do at the behest of their friend Mr. Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada, they will have to increase the Alberta investor tax credit. That is a question, of course, that we have to ask.

What about the others, Mr. Speaker? The AITC is only one of a suite of tax credits adjusted or introduced in Bill 2. A concern is that the government is playing favourites by keeping the focus of the tax credits on a relatively narrow sector of industries, and that, of course, again is a concern. Is this the right approach for Alberta? The folks that I've spoken to in Calgary-West don't believe that it is.

Now, we maintain that the government should place its focus elsewhere than in creating boutique tax credits like the ones in Bill 2. A good example of a more fruitful way to assist businesses is by reducing red tape. It may seem obvious, Mr. Speaker. If the NDP were actually to ask industry what would benefit them the most, they would hear about the benefits of getting rid of or eradicating the regulatory burdens that are placed upon many of these businesses. Allow me to note what the CFIB said about the red tape.

3:30

Alberta is the only provincial government in Canada that refuses to be publicly accountable for the regulatory burden . . . Last year, a private members' bill to put constraints on regulators was voted down. While taking responsibility for red tape can be challenging, experience shows that it can be done if there is the will.

The bill that the CFIB was referring to was introduced by my colleague and friend the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, a very good and common-sense bill that would have ensured that any time the government introduces a new regulation, it deleted one on the books, maybe too common-sense for this government, Mr. Speaker. I know that my friend from Cardston-Taber-Warner put a lot of, you know, effort into that bill and a lot of thought and consulted with businesses, and it was certainly what he believed to be a good, common-sense bill that I think would be able to assist businesses in dealing with, of course, the regulatory burdens that have been placed upon them.

As evidenced by Bill 2, they prefer to introduce unnecessary means to supposedly help business instead of taking measures that

actually do help them. Instead of reviewing the technology sector's real needs before introducing tax credits or increasing and adjusting others, the NDP goes forth and multiplies, sadly, its mistakes.

The minister spoke of levelling the playing field in a speech referencing the fact that this government has now put Alberta in competition with the rest of Canada. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy for Alberta to compete for economic investment. Of course, that's something that is welcomed in Alberta. But the point is that before the government came into power, Alberta had already been dominating that field for a great deal of time. Before the NDP came into power, Alberta was a key player on that field. Then this government implemented numerous policies, some of which were misguided, and blew up that particular field. Now they are trying to level it again. It doesn't make sense to me. They should have been more careful not to destroy, you know, a field that they were playing on in the first place.

What this government does not seem to realize, even after all of this time, is that industry does not need government to hold its hand. In fact, many of the businesses which I have spoken to and many of the business owners in Calgary-West want government to essentially leave them alone. They want to pay their fair share of taxes, but they are not looking for increased burdens or incentives or handouts. They just want the ability to, you know, have a business, grow that business, employ people, provide a positive impact on the economy not only in their local area but, of course, in Alberta as a whole. Many of these businesses and entrepreneurs provide a positive impact to Canada as well.

Industry just needs government to stop, you know, tripping them up at every turn, every stop. Before Bill 2 moved to its final stage in this legislative process, we urged this Assembly to send this bill to committee for review. They would have none of it, sadly, which I think is very disappointing. I think it's very important that we have that consultation, that review, hearing from those necessary stakeholders in order that we provide a really sound decision for the people of Alberta. This government, sadly, appears to be very happy just to write cheques, never knowing whether they make that difference or not. That goes back to what I was saying earlier about having those benchmarks. It's important to have those benchmarks so that you know if what you're investing in is successful or not successful.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has had six credit downgrades since 2005, all after the NDP formed government. I've had this unique opportunity in my second term. Although my first term was very short, just six months, I can tell you, from the people that I spoke to during the massive number of doors that I knocked on, whether it be in 2014 or whether it be in 2015, that there was a huge sense of pride in having a triple-A credit rating, and it was one that actually took me aback a bit.

My background, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is in law enforcement. I'm not necessarily a businessman, we'll say, although I do have some management background. I was surprised when going to those doors. Knowing that we had that triple-A credit rating, many people just appeared to wear that as a badge of honour. So I feel that, sadly, the multiple downgrades, if I was to talk from my perspective in law enforcement, have had a serious impact on what I would call morale of what we would call in this case the people of Alberta. I think that the downgrades and the lowering of those credit ratings has had more of a significant impact on the people of Alberta than maybe this government tends to even realize.

Thanks to our Finance minister we know that Alberta's debt is projected to reach \$96 billion. And our six downgrades, right? [interjections] Yeah. Thank you. Should the NDP continue in government, of course, until 2024, you know, I certainly would

have some concerns about any further increases to debt and forecasting and going down this particular path, Mr. Speaker.

So while Bill 2 isn't the most expensive policy decision the NDP has made, it's typical of its practice of Band-Aiding on top of Band-Aiding, and this, Mr. Speaker, has got to stop. You know, we can send a strong message by voting this bill down together, collectively, as a group, as Members of this Legislative Assembly.

The CFIB tells us from its surveys with the business community that 92 per cent of business owners are not confident that this NDP government is committed to improving the business climate. We have all kinds of examples of, you know, business-killing policies that have been put forward over the last several years. One of its first moves was to increase taxes on larger businesses and high-income earners, then it piled on environmental and other regulations with little, if any, consultation with those affected, and then it focused on measures such as the minimum wage, that increased labour costs. Sadly, again, many of the businesses I have spoken to have had to cut corners, lay people off, raise prices as a result of those increased labour costs, which is very disappointing, Mr. Speaker.

What does it have to deflect from? It chooses specific sectors to hand out its tax credits to. [Mr. Ellis's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any questions to the Member for Calgary-West under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-West for his comments on this bill. His presentation I found interesting. I do have a question that follows up on some of the content that the hon. member discussed. He brought up some of the concerns that are happening in his constituency. In fact, actually, I have a quote here that is very applicable to the Member for Calgary-West's constituency. It's from the Calgary Chamber of commerce. It says, "It's becoming harder to run a successful business in Calgary." The reason that the Chamber cites for that is the carbon tax in addition to rising labour costs, increasing personal and corporate taxes, and the layers of government costs associated with government policy.

3:40

In another one, which the hon. member spoke about – but I think it's worth repeating – the Finance minister just a few moments ago confirmed this statistic, which was very helpful. The CFIB says that 92 per cent of business owners are not confident the Alberta government is committed to improving the business climate.

Certainly, in the member's constituency and in the member's hometown, the city that he comes from, things are still not well. I know that's how it is in the communities that I represent. There's still no confidence in this government. I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that this NDP government implemented several economically damaging policies. Alberta was already an attractive place to invest, but when this government came into place, they focused so much on their ideology and did not listen to the people that were being hurt as a result of that ideology. Now we see the results.

Here they come, and instead of fixing those damaging policies, instead of recognizing that the decisions that the NDP government in Alberta has made over the last few years have had significant consequences for job creators in our communities, they want to gloss over that and hope that Albertans will forget that. They want

to bring in a very limited program instead of doing what they should do – and I want to see if the hon. member agrees with me – which is reduce regulatory and tax burdens for businesses, reduce them for investors, and get out of the way. I think the hon. member said that his constituents just want the government to get out of their way.

Since this NDP government has come into power, in 2015, all this party across from me can do is get in the way of job creators. It's caused devastating impacts on Albertans and on the people we represent. I wonder if the member would expand on that.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you. Thank you to the hon. member who just spoke, as well as to you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, certainly, as I previously mentioned, we do have many business owners in Calgary-West who are having challenges in getting money from investors. We have a government that is essentially getting, you know, in the way. We talked about labour costs there with some of the restaurant owners that I was talking to. I'll just be very brief, Mr. Speaker. I had an opportunity to go out with some stakeholders to a restaurant, and in speaking with the server, she was very excited to show me an iPad that she was using in order to conduct her business as a server. She indicated that when she became proficient on that iPad, she would be given a larger section. A result of that larger section would be that some of her colleagues would be laid off. That was very disappointing to hear.

We're seeing the increased costs and burdens on these businesses. Again, many stakeholders in Calgary-West are really just wanting this government to, you know, kind of get out of the way and allow them to be the job creators and that backbone of industry in order to continue to support the people in the community, in order to provide good jobs, good, mortgage-paying jobs for other people not only in Calgary-West but in Calgary as well as Alberta as a whole.

I think it is very, very important that the regulations be, you know, taken back a bit and that we really just allow businesses to flourish.

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

Mr. Nixon: Let's not forget Sundre today, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: . . . Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: We can't forget about the good people of Sundre.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to talk about Bill 2 in third reading. I think it's important that we acknowledge as we discuss Bill 2 the reason that we find ourselves in this situation. Alberta was one of the greatest districts in the world to invest in. We had the Alberta advantage. We were the envy of the world in many aspects. Then in 2015 the NDP government was elected, and they took that Alberta advantage and just basically threw it out.

They came into this place, and from the moment that they arrived in Edmonton, from the moment that they were sworn into government – Mr. Speaker, I know that you've had a front-row seat to watch it for the last three years – they focused on their ideological agenda. They focused on implementing ideological policy and legislation that did not benefit Albertans, that sometimes maybe benefited friends or people associated with the NDP. It certainly did not benefit everyday Albertans, not the Albertans that I represent. They brought in these ideological policies, damaged our economy at the worst possible time, during a terrible recession, refused to listen to anybody, including their own constituents – we hear all the

time everywhere we travel in the province, in NDP ridings how frustrated they were about that – and then blindly followed their ideology.

A couple of examples, Mr. Speaker. Let's start with the first. They brought in a royalty review right in the middle of one of the worst recessions, the worst recession in my lifetime and in the lifetimes of many people in this Chamber. They focused on a royalty review, which did what?

Mr. Speaker, I actually should back up. What happened when they started to talk about a royalty review? What did the opposition tell them? "This is going to scare away investment. You're going to scare away investment at the worst time, when our constituents are losing their homes, losing their cars, or having trouble getting their children into university. You're going to make a terrible situation worse. You're going to scare away our job creators and send them to places elsewhere, where they're going to be treated appropriately. You're going to create instability within our system at the absolutely wrong time."

Now, what did the government do? They went ahead, and they did it anyway. They did a full royalty review, and in the end, Mr. Speaker, they barely changed anything. But during that royalty review, just as the opposition predicted, billions and billions and billions of dollars of investment left this province, and it hasn't come back. It has not come back.

In fact, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was in Toronto not too long. He was talking about this the other day in the Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you caught that. He was meeting with some investors on Bay Street, big investors who like Alberta, who made it clear that they put one big red X on investing in Alberta until one condition is fixed. You know what that condition is? That this NDP government is no longer in power. That's how badly they screwed up doing stuff like the royalty review.

Billions of dollars in investment gone; my constituents and your constituents, many of them struggling to make home payments, sitting in the unemployment line for well over years; record – record – unemployment out of this government: they're proud of that? Sometimes they want to stand up and high-five each other and declare victory on different things, like they tend to do in this Chamber, although there is no victory. You know, the Deputy Premier on that issue rose not too long ago in this Chamber and said that those couple of hundred thousand people who've lost their jobs under this NDP government's watch were just an opportunity cost for them to bring in their ideological agenda. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful.

Bringing a bill like Bill 2 to the floor, you know, that goes nowhere near beginning to fix the issues that this government brought forward or have caused as a result of their ideological agenda, is also shameful. This government knows what they need to do if they want to fix some of the damaging policies that they brought forward, but they won't because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, they can't see beyond their ideological views. They can't see beyond them. They're so focused on that bubble of the NDP world view.

Again, this is a government who has stood in this Chamber and admitted that they had to hire tremendous people that did not live in this province, in the Deputy Premier's own words, because she could not find people in the province of Alberta that shared her world view. That shared her world view. She had to go hire other people. She's admitted it on *Hansard*. I was shocked. I'm sure you were shocked, Mr. Speaker, when she said that.

3:50

Ms Jabbour: She didn't say that.

Mr. Nixon: Folks, the Member for Peace River is saying that the Deputy Premier did not say it. She did say that.

But let's talk about Peace River for a while. Let's talk about the damaging policies in Peace River, in that member's constituency. Not too long ago I had the privilege of visiting La Crête. Devastated by the decisions of this government. Devastated by it – they talk about it all the time – and frustrated with the lack of representation that they get from this government on these important issues.

The royalty review, and now another example. Then this government focuses on raising taxes. Often when we talk about them raising taxes, they want to point out that Alberta has, you know, the best tax advantage in the country. That may not be true anymore, but if it is true, I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and the hon. Member for Calgary-West, who are here today from the former government, who created that tax advantage.

This government began to systematically take it apart the moment that they took office. Again, scaring away investors, scaring away job creators, costing Albertans more money at the worst possible time, when they were dealing with the worst recession in the history of this province.

Now, where do they go after that? They bring forward a bill, a bill that has become – I don't even know what to call that bill. It was so outrageous.

Mr. McIver: Notorious.

Mr. Nixon: Notorious. Thank you, hon. member. Notorious.

A bill that attacked rural Alberta, a place that is near and dear to me. I'm proud to be a rural Albertan, Mr. Speaker. We stood here, and one of the first – I think it was in the second sitting of this government when they brought forward a piece of legislation that outraged rural Alberta. The NDP will never win a seat in rural Alberta for a very long time because of that bill, I predict. We'll see if I'm right. It outraged farmers and ranchers across this entire province. Without even talking to them, they brought in legislation that changed their whole way of life, that would not fit, and still – still – they haven't been able to get the regulations to work because they won't talk to farmers and ranchers. Farmers and ranchers need to be consulted before you change the rules of their operation.

Worse than that, Mr. Speaker, they went far enough that they almost collapsed the entire family farm, which is the majority of the agriculture industry in our province. If it was not for the opposition, supported by constituents from every corner of this province, who came to this place, who rallied on the steps, who said, "We will not accept this," kids in 4-H, farmers and ranchers, my neighbours and friends, who watched this government stand in this House and even accuse them of deliberately trying to hurt workers – they stood up, and in the end the government brought in an amendment that was able to save the family farm but still left the rest of the bill in place, that they have not been able to implement.

They haven't been able to implement it because it's just a mess. But it left the rest of the bill in place and created a tremendous amount of red tape, hurting our second-largest industry at the exact worst time that you could ever think of because our first-largest industry was in a crisis situation during the recession.

In the communities that I represent, Mr. Speaker, if it was not for the agriculture industry over the last few years, we would have been in significantly worse shape. As the energy industry crashed around us, our agriculture industry carried us forward. Not only did they carry us forward economically, keeping our towns operating, they still continued to feed us and feed the world despite this government working against them each and every day. The worst part about that is that the rural members of their caucus supported that. That's what they brought forward.

If you were an investor in the agriculture industry, would you want to come and invest right now inside this province when you know that you have a government that is willing to completely attack that industry and the people that work in it so savagely, that shows so little regard for that industry? Of course not, Mr. Speaker. You would not want to come and participate in that.

Another example, Mr. Speaker. This is in some ways probably the most terrible thing that this government did. They brought in a carbon tax that not one of these members – not one of these members – when they campaigned to come to this place talked about with their constituents, not at one door, not in anything, not in any document, didn't bring it up at all, hid it completely from Albertans, part of their hidden agenda.

Then they came into this place, put in a carbon tax that absolutely damaged our economy, continues to damage our economy. But further than that, not only damaging our economy and hurting everyday Albertans as they pay their bills, they went and attacked the very social fabric of many of our communities: seniors' centres, swimming pools, arenas, schools, municipalities, on and on and on, nonprofits, food banks, women's shelters, on and on. This government won't do anything about it. Nothing. So, again, they created a situation that is not great for investors.

Then, of course, we know that the minimum wage increases that this government has done under their watch have resulted in tens of thousands of jobs across this province going away, you know, and are having significant impacts on some of the other small employers in our communities, on youth employment as well. It's so disappointing.

Now here we are. The NDP realizes that they completely made a mess of this situation. Maybe they don't even realize it – who knows anymore at this point with this government – but they certainly did create a mess of it. The record is clear. The majority of Albertans certainly agree. Instead of doing what they should do, which is reverse their damaging policies, reduce the regulatory and tax burdens that they put on businesses and on investors, Mr. Speaker, what do they do instead? They bring in Bill 2, that is focused on very limited sectors, that does not help the broader province. For significantly less money they could just reduce their damaging policies and let businesses come and do their job.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that under their watch has seen that 92 per cent of business owners – 92 per cent of business owners in this province – are not confident that the Alberta government is getting this right. Entrepreneurs in Alberta are the least confident in the entire country under this government. Entrepreneurs in Alberta are the least confident in the entire country. Alberta used to be the most entrepreneurial in the entire country. It used to be the beacon of that to this country. Now our entrepreneurs are the least confident in this entire country. Why? Because of the NDP's damaging ideological policies.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, I talked about this with the Member for Calgary-West. When I was speaking after his remarks, I asked him a question on a quote from the Calgary Chamber of commerce, inside our largest city, that it's becoming harder to run a successful business in Calgary under this NDP government's watch. Why do they say that? You know, all those members there want to roll their eyes over this, but the Chamber of commerce, who is not partisan, says that it's because of the carbon tax – I think I brought that up – rising labour costs, increased personal and corporate taxes, and the layered cost of government policy. That's what this government did.

It is further concerning to me with this legislation given that the NDP's track record on programs such as what's in Bill 2 has not been promising so far. There were difficulties and delays in providing the Alberta investor tax credit funding in a timely fashion last year. Everybody remember that? Meanwhile the interactive digital media tax credit program will not have any program or application details until the summer of 2018.

Madam Speaker, I do not know about the constituents in your constituency, but my constituents don't have time to wait anymore for this government to continue to play these games. Instead of trying to fix the mess that you created, the absolute devastation that you put on the people of Alberta, with a Band-Aid solution that only picks winners and losers – the government only gets to pick winners and losers for select groups – you should do what's right and immediately do what the large majority of Albertans are calling for and reverse the carbon tax immediately. This would be the first thing you could do. That's the number one thing you could do, and it would have a bigger impact than this bill.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Under these members' watch, Madam Speaker, they've watched investment flee – we saw it – because they won't take action beyond their ideological agenda. Kinder Morgan is a prime example. Everybody wants Kinder Morgan built in this House – it's good – but this government would not do the simple things that it would take. Actually, I shouldn't say that they'd be simple; they'd be hard. But they would not take the time to do the hard things. Get the protesters out of the way, shut the taps off to B.C., and say: build this pipeline instead of breaking the law.

Now, because they could not do that, we see a large investor, a private investor, taking billions of dollars out of our economy and elsewhere. This government failed, Madam Speaker. They failed, and you know what they did when they failed? They went outside the Legislature and high-fived themselves about billions of dollars of investment leaving this province. It was disgraceful. And still we're here with no clear explanation of how they're going to address it.

Instead they're bringing in a bill that has limited potential. While there are some good things within it for some good people and some good job creators, it certainly cannot turn around the mess that this government has made of the economy. It cannot turn around the mess that they have made of this economy.

4:00

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for his comments. Madam Speaker, you know, as he was talking there, he made me think of our friend the late, great Manmeet Bhullar, former Member for Calgary-Greenway and, certainly, a football colleague of our friend from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I'll never forget when Mr. Bhullar said to the Minister of Finance: "Minister, 30 per cent of our income that comes in for Alberta comes from people who choose – who choose – to pay their taxes here in Alberta. If you raise the cost of personal income tax, if you raise the cost of corporate taxes, if you raise the overall cost to just do business, those people are going to choose to pay their taxes somewhere else." And from the numbers I have seen, those particular holes, I think – as we can see with our 9-plus billion dollar, it seems to me, annual deficit, those people have chosen to go somewhere else. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, I think,

would probably love the opportunity to expand on our good friend Manmeet Bhullar and the wise words that he had.

I'll add one more thing. The response from our Finance minister was that those people are going to stay here because of the mountains and lakes and this beautiful sunshine that we have here. If he can expand on that, I'd appreciate that.

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, hon. member. I'd be happy to expand on that. I'm always happy to talk about my friend the late, great Manmeet Bhullar. His comments were exactly right, and the Finance minister's comments were wrong. The Finance minister wanted to talk about staying here because of mountains and lakes. I have the privilege of representing one of the most beautiful mountain areas in not just the entire province or country but the world, hands down.

Mr. Carlier: Or the universe.

Mr. Nixon: The minister of agriculture says: the universe. If he takes a ride up highway 11 and goes to the Columbia Icefield, he may actually say that by the end of that ride on his motorcycle. Absolutely, it's a beautiful place.

I can tell you that people fled our communities not because they wanted to but because the job creators in our communities left. Our population started to drop underneath this NDP government more significantly. Our employers left and went to other jurisdictions in the world, sometimes to dictatorship jurisdictions, because of the decisions that this government was making.

Madam Chair – I got used to committee the last few days. Sorry, Madam Speaker. If the Finance minister of Alberta thinks that he can destroy the entire economy and that the mountains and the lakes are going to keep everybody here, that probably shows you what the biggest problem we have here right now is, that the NDP are completely out of touch and they don't care. That's the biggest thing that I hear right now, and I'm sure the hon. member would agree with me right now. Everywhere I go in this province right now, they say: "The NDP government does not care. They don't care about us. They tell us to finance to pay for our carbon tax. They tell us to shut our swimming pools and not let our kids have a place to recreate to pay for their ideological carbon tax." They attack farmers and ranchers. They attack rural Alberta. They do not care about our province. Certainly, the way they act shows that they don't care.

The comments from the Finance minister saying that the mountains will be able to overcome his \$10 billion deficit or \$9 billion and change deficit, his budget that puts us on track for \$96 billion in debt, borrowing money against my children's and my grandchildren's and my great-grandchildren's futures – I mean, as I said before, one of the largest intergenerational thefts, in my perspective and in many Albertans' perspective, is being undertaken by this Finance minister and this government.

And what happens? If Manmeet was here today, I know what he would say. He would say to the backbenchers of this government: "Shame on you. Why have you not stood up – why have you not stood up – to this cabinet? Why have you not stood up for the people that you represent?" That's what he would have said. In fact, I watched him say it in this Chamber many times. He would have said: shame on you. He would have. That's what he would have said. He's not here to say it, so on behalf of Manmeet I say it: shame on you. You have a responsibility to stand up for your constituents.

Instead, you have continued – the Minister of Education: he has a responsibility to stand up for his constituents, too. He does,

Madam Speaker. Through you to him: stand up for your constituents. But you won't. Instead, you come here and heckle and continue to bring in brutal, damaging policies to the people I represent. You continue to attack the communities that I represent, and that's what the opposition is frustrated about, and that is what Albertans are frustrated about. They've had enough of this government and their ideological agenda. They've had enough of it.

As for the Member for Calgary-West's point . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and offer a few comments, if I can, on some of the statements that we . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. minister, did you move third reading of this bill?

Mr. Schmidt: I did. This is 29(2)(a).

The Acting Speaker: No. The time is up under 29(2)(a). You'll have to wait till the next time.

Mr. Schmidt: Oh.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. McIver: All right. We're back on focus here. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. Bill 2: my colleagues have made some very good comments that I hope the government is paying attention to, but they have only touched, scratched the surface on the damage that this government has done to this province, damage that Bill 2 is not going to come anywhere near fixing.

Since this government has come to power, they have – you know what? Here's the thing. Some of my colleagues talked a little bit about some of the things that this government has done, and one of the things that they touched on was the royalty review. They're correct in what they said. Having a royalty review at a time when the industry was under great stress was a really bad idea. Again, as my colleague said on this side of the House, billions of dollars of investment have flown, have left Alberta, and have not come back.

But here's the thing. This is what's really interesting, Madam Speaker. Even when they did that, they almost didn't get it all wrong. Almost. What I mean by that is that when they – I was there the day that they announced the results of the royalty review. Frankly – and I've said this publicly before, so no one should be shocked – I said that I was pleasantly surprised with the recommendations from the royalty review, which is to say that they didn't really change anything much. They tinkered with a couple of things, tried to make it better, but they didn't really make anything bad. The problem was the months that they went through leading up to that, letting industry and business think that they were going to get damaging policies coming in. It drove a bunch of investment out.

Here's the thing. When they released the recommendations from the royalty review, they weren't bad, because what the government realized is that all the bad things they said about the system before and how Albertans weren't getting their fair share – essentially, the conclusion was that Albertans really were getting their fair share, which is why they didn't have to make a big change. As much as there was damage that was inflicted upon Alberta's economy for months on end before they gave the – because, of course, the

government members, through the election and then after, were saying: "Oh, we're going to get our fair share. We're going to take a lot more out of the industry."

Of course, the industry is saying: well, these people are going to fleece us like crazy. No wonder they left, because margins, in many cases, were tight. A lot of business is tough to do. Business was having a hard time making the type of money that they would like to make, and then you've got a government standing up saying: we're really going to give it to you with the taxes now. Then at least at the royalty review part: they got them with the taxes in a lot of other areas, but in the royalty review part they didn't. You know what? I would say that confidence was restored to a certain degree in the industry.

The problem is that it was restored for 10 seconds, and then the Premier and the Finance minister said: we are not going to raise your royalties – wait for it, Madam Speaker – yet. All that goodwill: out the window. They had 10 good seconds, though. They were a glorious 10 seconds when the industry thought the government got it right.

Then the Finance minister and the Premier stood up and said: "We won't raise the royalties yet. In other words, we know you're not making much money now. We know you're hurting. We know you're having a hard time staying in business. We know you're having a hard time to afford to employ Albertans. But we're just putting you on notice that the minute it gets better, we're going to take that away from you and make sure you're always just barely making a living. We're never going to let you live. We're never going to let you have a decent return to your shareholders. We're never going to let you thrive. We're never going to let you have enough profit left over to invest in new jobs, new technology, new inventions, new employment, a future for Albertans, for our grandchildren."

But they were a glorious 10 seconds before the government shot itself in the foot, Madam Speaker. I was cheering for those 10 seconds. I remember it so well because in the three-plus years that the gang across the aisle has been in office, there have been very few opportunities to cheer them on. Those were a glorious 10 seconds, and I want to thank the government for those 10 seconds. Fabulous. Fabulous.

4:10

What I didn't know is that while I was so happy during the 10 seconds, they were loading the gun, figuratively, to shoot themselves in the foot because, of course, all that confidence that the industry had went away about 10 seconds later, when they used the word "yet." We're going to hurt you later, not today, but as soon as we think you're doing well, we're going to hurt you again financially: that was the message from the Finance minister, the message from the Premier. All that goodwill, the fabulous, glorious, wonderful, outstanding, stupendous, exciting, good, great 10 seconds: it all went whoosh in about half a second after the 10 seconds. But I just have to say it again: those were a fantastic 10 seconds, really, really good. I will say my whole life that I was there in person – in person – in the same room to enjoy those 10 seconds. Man, that was great. That was fantastic.

Now the government wants to undo all of that damage with some boutique tax credits. You know what? I will agree with what some of my colleagues said: they're not all bad. The problem is that they're not going to undo the damage that this government has done. They're not going to undo the corporate tax increases. They're not going to undo the personal tax increases. They're not going to undo the job-killing, spirit-breaking carbon tax, that makes it more expensive for kids to swim in warm water, that makes it more expensive for kids to skate on cold ice because they get nailed

with the carbon tax both ways. It's more expensive either way with this government. There's no getting around it. Everything that people pay for is more expensive.

In fact, the government pretty much acknowledges it constantly in, you know, the fact that they spend a good part of what they collect in the carbon tax to undo the damage of – wait for it – the carbon tax. They're giving 40 per cent of it, a large percentage, back to people in rebates. In other words, they're spending money from the carbon tax to undo the damage of the carbon tax. Well, maybe you just don't put the carbon tax on in the first place. You don't have to undo all the damage. Then you caused whole towns with coal mines to be damaged and have a big hole put in their employment. Then they spend more millions of dollars out of the carbon tax to – wait for it – undo the damage of the carbon tax. This is the track record of this government: make a big old mess, and then throw money at it to try to have people forget that they made the big old mess. It's really, really, really unfortunate the way they're doing this.

Here's the problem. We're hoping that we're going to have a different government in Alberta next year. None of us know that. But even if we do, the way I look at it is that it's like, Madam Speaker, if I give you a shoelace and give you 10 minutes to tie knots in it, or if you give me a shoelace and you give me 10 minutes to tie knots in it. You and I won't be able to untie each other's knots in the same 10 minutes. It'll take hours. The whole problem is with the gang across here. They've made a mess of Alberta's economy, they've made a mess of everything in Alberta over four years, and it will take decades to undo the damage, the mess that this government has made. I believe that all Albertans will be in a big rush at election time to stop the mess that this gang is making and to look for somebody else to start fixing the damage that has been done in the last three years and will be done for four years by the time the next election comes.

Madam Speaker, that leads me to the place where I would like to move an amendment, please.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, can you just wait till I have a copy at the table, please?

Mr. McIver: Of course.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. McIver: I'll stand silent until you give me permission, okay? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, please go ahead. Your amendment will be referred to as amendment HA1.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that very much. If it's okay with you, I'll start by reading the amendment. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day three months hence.

Madam Speaker, based on this government's track record, I can't think of a more sensible amendment to make because, remember, this is a government that can't shoot straight. They get almost everything wrong that they do, and this legislation is another example. These things that they're trying to do for business, some of them are very good. The problem is that they're ignoring all the bad things they did. With some of these things the support for business would come in if they just hadn't killed and slowed down and damaged the amount of business that's already being done.

When hundreds of thousands of jobs left after this government came to power, a lot of those jobs were good, mortgage-paying jobs.

Here's the problem with that. Diversification is a good thing, and every government wants to bring in diversification. It will never be enough no matter how much is done because that's just the nature of the world. The fact is that it seems that almost every time the government makes a piece of legislation, they get it wrong, and many times they have to come back with one or two or three other pieces of legislation to fix all the things they got wrong the first time to get it right. This amendment would give the government three months to actually think about what they've done here and get some of the things right that they might have gotten wrong.

I know there will be members on the government side who say, "Oh, no; we don't do that," but, yeah, they do. Just this session they brought forward a bill that was four pages long. We on the Official Opposition side started pointing out that there were problems with the bill. They stood up, they stuck their chests out, and they said: "You people don't know what you're talking about. This is fantastic. It's fine. We've got it right. Why don't you just vote for it? If you love Alberta, you'll vote for it." Then we pointed out that there were things on the website that said three different things on the same topic, and then the minister, that two minutes before was saying that everything was perfect, said: "Well, yeah. Maybe this isn't right. Maybe we've got to do something different with that."

But wait. It gets better. A week later, a few days later, the same minister or another member of the government walks in and drops a three-page amendment on a four-page bill. Three pages of amendments on a bill they said was perfect. It was obviously not by our reckoning. But by the government's reckoning it was three-quarters wrong. Not just a little wrong. It didn't just miss dotting the i's or didn't just miss crossing the t's, didn't make a little mistake on page 2 that could easily be corrected. Three out of four pages of the legislation were wrong, not because I say so, Madam Speaker, but because the government said so, right after thrashing the opposition for criticizing their bill. "It's so great. It's perfect. We got everything right. Why don't you people listen? Why don't you pay attention? Why don't you do it our way?" Good thing we didn't pass the bill in one day because then they would've had to go and have a second bill with those three pages of amendments to correct the first bill.

So you see why this amendment is so important, Madam Speaker, because that gang can't shoot straight. They haven't been able to shoot straight for the whole three years they've had here, and they still can't shoot straight now. It's the way they operate. I don't know why that is. They are not able to get it right the first time. So I think that any time we give them a little bit of time to think about what they've done – and here's a great idea: talk to Albertans about it.

That's really one of their big failings. They don't actually talk to the people that their legislation affects. I know they sometimes go through the motions. We hear about meetings with the ministers, where they'll come in and the minister is answering e-mails or something while the staff is trying to carry on a conversation. Then: "All right. Your 30 minutes are up. Check. We met with that industry group." They didn't hear a thing they said, but they met with the industry group. That is the track record of this government in the way that they have operated for the last three years. And it's not once or twice. It's not one ministry or two ministries, Madam Speaker. It's just about the whole gang on the front bench. That's how they operate. Why?

4:20

We actually talk to Albertans, and Albertans tell us that. I know the government, some of them are probably a little bit embarrassed to hear this now, but that is what we constantly get told about the

way that they operate when they talk to Albertans who are stakeholders and who legislation affects. It's dismissive, it's disrespectful, and there's not enough listening to know what is good, what Albertans want and what they don't want, which is why they're constantly getting themselves in trouble.

Now, Madam Speaker, every government gets themselves in trouble. The last government, the one I was part of, got themselves in trouble sometimes. You know when we got ourselves in trouble, in my opinion? In most cases it was when we were in a hurry. Because when you're in a hurry, you don't take the time to talk to Albertans as much as you should. You don't take the time. Because you know what? Everybody is entitled to bad ideas, and sometimes people have great ideas, but whether your idea is great or bad, you actually ought to test it out with the people it affects and maybe ask them before you commit it to legislation. When the old government sometimes didn't take the time to ask Albertans, they got in trouble, and the same is true with this government.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. I was listening to my colleague speak on the lack of consultation by this government, and what kept popping to mind every time he would say lack of consultation was Bill 6. That was where we more or less slapped all of our farmers and ranchers across the province in the face.

Now, why that is relevant here is that had we put forward a hoist like what my hon. colleague is doing right now, it would have given us some time to go out and talk with the farmers and ranchers that were clearly sending signals to this current government that they were very unhappy with the legislation that was being put forward. Had we been able to move that legislation forward in time just a little bit, do some consultation with those people that were going to be affected by it – you know, I can understand that the government had some concerns – I believe that what happens here is that they can work together and come up with a compromise that both the industry and government can move forward with.

But what we end up seeing is a government that moves head-on right into the empty pool, if you will. They go off the highest diving board they can find. They dive and do all their tricks all the way down, and when they hit the bottom, there's nothing there to catch them, just a cement bottom. What we've got here is a government that continues to follow that pattern of lack of consultation.

My question to my colleague. Bill 6 was one of the big failures of this government, and I would say that we still haven't seen the regulations come through from the government after. This was the first thing, one of the cornerstones, that they had brought forward to keep the farm workers safe. Now, to the member: do you think that had they not moved so quickly on it, that potential of this incredible incitement of all of our farmers and ranchers would have happened? Like with what's happening here, do you think that if they weren't rushing headlong into legislation, they might get it right?

The Acting Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank my hon. colleague for this question because he puts his finger right on the problem and the reason why everybody in this House should support this amendment. On Bill 6 it has been – what? – a year and a half, two years since they passed the legislation, and the government still hasn't come out with the regulations because they got the bill wrong. There are still regulations that are waiting to come out. Farmers and ranchers, afraid for their living, still don't

know all the rules that are going to change under this government. When they brought it out, it was obvious. I mean, we had thousands of people from all over Alberta on the front steps of the Legislature with signs, yelling and screaming and singing and dancing and chanting and telling this government to stop. All those signs: kill Bill 6.

Meanwhile the government actually had the audacity to say: we are going to create a culture of safety. Albertans have been safely farming for over 100 years, maybe over 200 years, for a long, long time. I don't know when the first farm was. Yet this government had the courage, the audacity, the incredible lack of respect for the people that feed the rest of us to say that they needed to create a culture of safety, as if the farmers and ranchers were treating their staff like chattel or not caring about whether they lived or died or whether they went home safe at the end of the day, and exactly the opposite was true.

They also talked about how many farms and ranches didn't have any insurance. Well, a lot of them had insurance. They just didn't have the government-forced insurance, the WCB. A lot of farmers and ranchers that I've run into since – and I'm a city boy, so I don't talk to as many farmers and ranchers as some of my rural colleagues – have told me that they had better insurance for themselves and their employees and at a better price before the government forced them into the government insurance plans. If the government had actually talked to them in a respectful dialogue, a two-way dialogue, they would have realized that before they forced this legislation down their throats.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment that was brought forward, that: "Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a Third time but that it be read a Third time this day three months hence." In listening to the speech from the Member for Calgary-Hays, there were a number of thoughts that occurred to me, some of them that I will willingly share in this House.

First of all, the Member for Calgary-Hays described with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm the 10 seconds in which he felt affection for an action of this government. Certainly, nothing is more disappointing to me than to know that there's something that we've done to lose the Member for Calgary-Hays' affection. That is something that weighs heavily on my mind, every time I make the Member for Calgary-Hays unhappy.

The other thing that occurred to me, though, is that he repeatedly referred to us as a gang, referred to us as this gang over here on this side, and said that we're certainly not a gang of straight shooters. Madam Speaker, I do have to express some dismay at being referred to as a gang although certainly if we were a gang, I'm sure our gang colour would be orange. We are nothing but a friendly and approachable group of people, certainly not the kind of people who would shoot. Although many of us have fired firearms, it's definitely not our preferred method of engaging with people. In fact, if we were a gang, it occurred to me that maybe we would be a gang like from the movie *West Side Story*, that instead of, you know, shooting or stabbing our opponents, we would just engage them in a dance-off.

Anyway, moving on from that. Of course, the Member for Calgary-Hays has referenced, as the members opposite are wont to do, the lack of consultation that we've engaged in on all of our bills. It doesn't matter what bill we bring forward or how much actual consultation we seem to engage in, the members opposite accuse us

of not listening to Albertans and not engaging in consultation. In fact, that is the spirit with which this amendment has been moved, that the three months between now and when we read this bill a third time would give us time to consult with Albertans.

Two points on that, Madam Speaker, that I'd like to make. First of all, this bill was, in fact, the result of extensive consultation that we undertook with many stakeholders across Alberta. The Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit were things that were good suggestions that were offered by many businesses, many chambers of commerce, and people interested in economic growth and development across Alberta. We heard loudly and clearly that the development of these kinds of tax credits was something that was long missing from Alberta, that actually existed in other jurisdictions, that if implemented here would enhance the growth and diversification of our economy. Since these tax credits have been introduced, I think it's fair to say that they've been successful in achieving their objectives. We're grateful for the advice that we received from all of the stakeholders in implementing these tax credits, and that's why we're so pleased to continue with these tax credits as we see here in this bill.

4:30

With respect to the development of the tax credits I don't see any particular reason that we would need to engage with stakeholders on this issue. We've already done so, Madam Speaker. We've taken their good advice, we've enacted it, and it's actually yielding positive results for the people of Alberta. So I'm not sure why the members opposite seem to think that we need to delay making a decision on whether or not those tax credits should be extended. It seems to me that if a good idea is working, we should keep it working.

On the issue of the interactive digital media tax credit as well as the technology spaces that are mentioned in the bill, this was the result of, again, extensive stakeholder consultation that we conducted, particularly with members of the interactive digital media world and in the high-tech world. They told us loudly and clearly that, again, this interactive digital media tax credit is something that exists in other jurisdictions, that has been very helpful in developing those industries in those jurisdictions, and that it would be beneficial to Alberta if we implemented that kind of program here in this province. Again, like we did with the investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit, we've taken their good advice, and we've sought to implement it.

Members of the high-tech industry have also told us that they can't find people who have the skills they need to go to work in this industry, and that's why we're investing significant dollars in expanding the number of tech-related education seats in our postsecondary education system.

To say that we haven't engaged in any consultation with Albertans is not true, Madam Speaker. In fact, we have engaged extensively with the people of Alberta. You know, our success with the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit we hope to duplicate with the interactive digital media tax credit and the expansion of the tech spaces. We've relied previously on stakeholders' good advice to implement those two tax credits. We're relying again on their good advice to implement this further tax credit and expand these seats. This bill before us is a product of extensive consultation. Certainly, I think that that work has been completed, Madam Speaker, and there's no need to conduct any further consultation over the next three months.

With respect to consultation there are a couple of other points that I'd like to make. Certainly, you know, we get lectured all the time from the members opposite about our failure to consult with real Albertans. It was with great interest that I read the news today,

Madam Speaker, that, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition won't be appearing in the Edmonton Pride Parade but is having an invitation-only breakfast event Pride adjacent, let's say – I don't know where exactly that's going to be – which strikes me as odd. It's odd that they would come into this House and accuse us of not talking to real Albertans, yet when it comes to talking to real members of the LGBTQ community, they're not interested.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you are deviating from the amendment that has been put in front of us. If you could please refer back to the amendment.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, with respect, Madam Speaker, I, of course, am referring to the amendment because the amendment was offered in the spirit of consultation. I'm just taking steps to poke holes in the authority that the members opposite seem to claim when they claim that they have some superior ability to consult with Albertans when, in fact, they've demonstrated time and again that they don't want to listen to Albertans that they feel disagree with their outlook on how the province should be run. So I raise that issue as well, that the members opposite are not exactly models that we would want to follow in terms of how to consult with the people of Alberta.

Mr. Westhead: Just like Bill 9.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes. Certainly, with respect to other issues that have been before the House, the members opposite have failed, in fact, to express any opinion whatsoever regardless of what they've heard from the people of Alberta.

Now, the timing of the amendment. Of course, it says that this bill be not now read a third time but be read three months hence. The Member for Calgary-Hays brought this amendment forward, saying that perhaps we would take the next three months to go home and think about what we've done and perhaps change our minds. It's interesting, Madam Speaker, because three months is approximately the same amount of time that we've been debating this very bill in this House.

Of course, we've heard a number of complaints from the members opposite about what they think are economy-destroying policies that our government has enacted, so economy destroying, in fact, that we have the fastest growing economy in the entire country, Madam Speaker. We created 90,000 jobs over the last year. The outlook, economic forecasts continue to be excellent.

What we've heard from the opposition are, of course, extensive complaints about what they imagine the state of the Alberta economy to be, yet all they've brought forward in terms of the counterproposals to the policies that we've brought forward is a reverse of the personal and corporate income tax increases that our government brought forward.

Of course, our goal here with this bill is to diversify the economy, something that Albertans told us loudly and clearly needed to be done and that the previous government had failed to act on. In fact, Madam Speaker, I think it could be fairly argued that, you know, reverting to the old tax regime would do as much to diversify the economy in 2018 as it did prior to 2015, which is nothing. The previous tax system in this province was not a terribly effective tool at diversifying the economy. The members opposite have really failed to explain to us or anybody why reverting to the old tax rates would be any more successful in growing and diversifying our economy than the measures that have been put forward in this bill. We've been arguing about this for three months. I suspect that if we were to come back to this bill in three months' time, we would be no further ahead in reaching a consensus on this issue.

You know, time and again when members opposite raised taxes as an issue, I've brought up the fact that our goal here is to stimulate investment using measures that have been successful in other jurisdictions. I've listed B.C. and Ontario and Quebec as jurisdictions that have similar tax structures, actually, to Alberta now. They also have prices on carbon. They also have corporate income tax rates that are similar to our own. They also have personal income taxes that in almost every case across the country are much higher than ours. Yet the members opposite have failed to explain to anybody why lowering personal and corporate tax rates here in Alberta would be any more successful in doing the thing that we're trying to do with this bill than it has been in any other jurisdiction. They have yet to explain to any of us why it is that Quebec has such an excellent interactive digital media economy even though their corporate tax rates are the same as ours. They also have a price on carbon. They have personal income tax rates that are much higher than Alberta's. They also have a provincial sales tax.

The members opposite have repeatedly failed to explain to us what their plan is, why they seem to want to vote against these particular initiatives and have nothing to offer.

Madam Speaker, this process has taken three months. We've been debating this bill for that time. Nobody's opinions have changed. Certainly, their opinions haven't changed. It doesn't make sense for us to delay this bill another three months when we suspect that in coming back to this bill in three months' time, we'll be no further ahead in resolving some of the differences that we've seen expressed in this House on our approaches to economic growth and diversification.

4:40

Madam Speaker, I must reiterate the importance with which we must act urgently. Certainly, the failure of Calgary to be included on the short list of the Amazon second headquarters was a wake-up call to the people of Alberta that we need to do something more to stimulate the growth of the high-tech sector here in the province. In fact, that's exactly what this bill accomplishes. That's why I urge all members to defeat this amendment and get on with passing this bill so that we can take effective and timely action to diversify the economy of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Is there anybody wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister of Advanced Education for asking us to explain certain things. First, I appreciate him keeping the tone in a civil manner, unlike his usual style. He tried to drift, and you tried to bring him back to the amendment.

He asked us why we are not explaining that lowering taxes will benefit. One point I want to mention to the minister is that if he looks at his government's record, when they actually increased the taxes for higher income groups and also businesses, the revenue came down. If your purpose in raising taxes is to collect higher revenue, but on the other hand, when you increased the taxes, the government's revenue has come down – I would like to ask him about that.

Also, I would ask him why businesses are actually leaving Alberta and going to other jurisdictions and investing in the same business. They are not taking their money away from Alberta and Canada and investing in different types of businesses. They're still investing in the same types of businesses. During their three years

in office \$35 billion of investment has left Alberta. If he and his front benches would reflect on that, then they'll find the answer, I guess.

Also, the fact he is forgetting is that I was the critic for economic development for two years. I tried to meet with the minister, the economic development minister, many times to actually talk to him on the impacts of some of these programs, including AITC and CITC, and he wouldn't meet me. I approached the Speaker and I asked the Speaker for help, and Mr. Speaker actually talked to him three times. Three different times. He still wouldn't meet his critic. It's not the case with other ministers. I could meet with the agriculture minister, the Health minister – it seems she meets people – but that particular minister was not interested to hear what Albertans were telling me as the critic. Then I used other avenues like budget estimates and other opportunities to ask him about AITC, CITC and what the economic impact is of those policies and how many jobs they actually created.

Coming back to this amendment that we are talking about, why we are asking for a three-month consultation period is that stakeholders are telling us: this minister always rushes things, and then he realizes. For example, in April 2016 there was a \$170 million job-creation grant program, that this government brought in with much fanfare, and then they had to abandon that. Probably they heard their stakeholders telling them, and they might have done the right thing. That's the benefit of consultation.

My colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake talked about Bill 6. With that type of ramming through of legislation, that left scars on those rural farmers. I don't think any of the NDP rural caucus are happy about it because I'm sure they heard it from rural Albertans. They should be worried about their seats.

Also, another reason we are asking them to step back and look at this policy is because of the credit downgrades we are getting. The only things that are looking up: the deficit is going up, debt is going up, and the Calgary office space vacancy rate is going up.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My colleague was going down a path of saying that consultation has been lacking when it comes to this government, especially when it comes to labour. To what the minister of postsecondary was saying, that on every bill that comes through, we criticize about lack of consultation, I would say that when it came to Bill 14, I never criticized that, and I didn't hear any of my colleagues criticize that specific bill. I actually even complimented the Minister of Service Alberta on that bill. That's the bill that deals with including water commissions and water services for municipalities. So to say that we criticize about consultation on every bill is very wide.

But I will say that what we do as opposition is that we try to make a bill better. When we get to the point where the government has more or less shot down every amendment that we bring forward, not giving the opposition the ability to be able to reinforce a bill like Bill 2, that's problematic.

The fact is that when it comes to Bill 2, what we're seeing is that the government has said that they've been moving this through and that it's been three months. Well, again, whenever we start to move legislation through the House at the rate that we're going, you're going to find that we're not perfect. We heard clearly from the Member for Calgary-Hays about the fact that the government is putting through legislation and coming in with amendments to fix their own legislation because it's so flawed. That clearly means that we're moving this legislation through the House too fast.

Now, what I would like to say – I'm going to pull up an article. Mark Milke is the author of the article. The title of the article is *Alberta Already Tried to Diversify Her Economy – and Failed*. This article is posted on the Fraser Institute web page. I know that the government may not like the Fraser Institute, but it does have a lot of valuable information there that highlights the government in what it's doing right and what it's doing wrong. A lot of times what happens is that our media focuses on the negative stuff, but in this case what we've got here is an article that's about diversification. I'd like to start with the very first sentence.

With the price of oil plunging to below \$50 per barrel and the outlook for Alberta's economy and provincial budget revenues falling in tandem, an oft-heard piece of advice is being recycled: Alberta should diversify its economy.

4:50

Diversification isn't a new idea. Actually, I would say that every government comes out and says: we should diversify. I think that if you were to poll Alberta as a whole, you are probably going to get 96 per cent of Albertans or even higher saying that they would like to see more diversification within Alberta. So there's clearly a desire there. The question is: how do you get there?

Now, we've got the NDP, that has decided that corporate welfare seems to be the path that they want to go down, and you've got the Conservatives, who are saying that a low tax regime will promote diversification. One says: we need to use taxpayer money, and we need to pick winners and losers. The other says: allow the market to dictate diversification; they'll find the best place for it, and they will be driven to our economy here because of the fact that they can make profits. Whenever government gets into business, we always see that there's a failure at some point. Governments were never meant, in my opinion, to be in business, and it's because we're very inefficient. The bigger we get as a government, the more inefficient we become.

When we look at these tax credits – and I'm going to go to a different article. I'll be flipping between the articles if time allows. "New Alberta Tax Credit Off to Slow Start with No Money Awarded Yet." Now, this was written on June 19, 2017, and this was specifically about the tax credits. What we've got here is an article that is showing that when they first announced this, there wasn't a whole lot of uptake from the industry, and that is because what we end up with in the end is a government picking winners and losers.

I just want to get to the point here. What we're looking at here is an article that is more or less saying in the first sentence here:

The Alberta Investor Tax Credit, which formally launched in January, offers a 30 per cent tax credit to private investors who put [their] money into companies doing work in non-traditional sectors such as information technology, clean technology, health technology, interactive digital media and game products, and digital animation.

It's clearly saying what its focus is.

Now we're seeing a second tranche or a second phase of the same one, and they're retargeting the same groups and with a lot of money. We don't even know if the first one was successful. The reason: the way that tax credits work, in order to receive a tax credit, you have to actually earn profits. It takes time for these businesses to earn the profit in order to be able to get the tax credit. Now, sometimes what happens is that it may take several years for a company to be able to have this tax credit pay out.

Moving on to where I'm going with this – and I'm going to be going through the different articles because they're all relevant – what we've got here is a Manitoba article from *agcanada.com*: "Manitoba Pulls Less-loved Ag Tax Credits in Budget." Underneath it says – and I know this might have some humour

involved in it – “Manure management, riparian tax credits end immediately.” What happens here is that in this article it goes on to talk about how the government brought forward tax credits in Manitoba with clear expectations on what their intent was, but nobody was actually seeing if the results were there for the tax credit.

Now, in this same article:

Friesen, in his speech, also announced the province is “eliminating boutique tax credits that had little uptake and failed to meet their objectives.”

Manitoba, with over 30 provincial tax credits, has had “among the most complex and diversified” tax credit system in the country, he said.

Among the tax credits that end effective Tuesday for farmers and agribusinesses are the odour control tax credit, the nutrient management tax credit and the riparian tax credit. All three cuts were listed as having “negligible” budget impact.

The odour control credit was an income tax credit for businesses that invested in capital projects to control “nuisance odours that arise or may arise from the use or production of organic waste.”

Now, it goes on to talk a little bit more specifically here, but what we have here is an article that says that there was a target of eliminating odour, and they created a tax credit. Inside of that tax credit was the intent to more or less move the economy in a different direction. Nobody took it up, and the government realized that they were managing something that wasn’t efficient.

Now, to hear the minister for postsecondary say that this is a wildly successful tax credit from the first phase, there’s nothing that actually can show that because it takes a long time for these tax credits to go through the system. It all derives from profit. They need time to build the capital. They need time to move forward with the project that the government is trying to diversify to.

Now, we’ve heard the government putting forward all of these success stories. The fact is that whenever we’ve got a success story, I’m glad to hear that, because I want to see Alberta succeed as much as any one of the other members do. But it’s a little soon to be bringing out a second phase of a tax credit system when we are not even sure that the first one worked. That is clearly problematic. The fact is that we had articles stating that the first phase wasn’t as successful as the government makes it sound like. The first phase sounded like it was failing, but over time – it took time to build that up. But we don’t know if it’s successful at this point yet, and I don’t believe the government has that information. If they do, they should share it. I am sure that if they did have that information, you can bet it would be on every billboard across Alberta.

Again, with this government, what happens is that they look at the immediate need, and they say: “Okay. We want to diversify, so we’re going to throw money at it. You know what? Maybe the first phase worked, maybe not – we don’t know – but we’re going to try throwing more money at it and, when the third phase comes along, throwing more money at it.” We find out that the first phase didn’t achieve what they had hoped. That is problematic. That is something where we need to ensure that our taxpayers, Alberta’s taxpayers, are respected.

Whenever we’ve got something as large as these tax credits, I think it’s admirable that the government is trying to find a way to diversify our economy. But why do we always need to throw money at it? Why do we always need to ensure that Alberta’s money is thrown into a bottomless pit, with nobody being held to account?

5:00

Now, I have to say that once we’ve gotten to the point where we’ve verified that the intent to create diversification happened, then maybe we can look at it, but we’re talking large windows of

time here, not just a year, not just six months. It takes decades to find out if this stuff works. I understand that the government wants to rush headlong into this stuff. Like Bill 6, if they get it wrong: well – you know what? – we can try, try again or put the regulations on hold. Hopefully, once we’ve got something that would be a compromise with the consulting – again, this minister for postsecondary has been very clear that it seems like they feel they’re doing an appropriate job. I hear from my own constituents that that would be something they would dispute.

What we have here is this hoist amendment saying: “Let’s give this some time and let the government go back and actually do some economic impact studies or income research in trying to work out: did the first phase work? How far along is this?”

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes. I enjoyed listening to the comments here from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I guess I was interested in hearing – he was kind of comparing these two different articles and quoting from each one. It was interesting to hear the comments and what was going on there, and I think it would be great to hear him continue on in that vein.

Thanks.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m going to go back to – thank you, again – Mr. Milke’s article. This specific article is Alberta Already Tried to Diversify Her Economy – and Failed. Now, what happens here is that I will continue on from the first one, which is saying that Albertans have for many years been saying that we should diversify. This is something that I believe the government is trying to hear Albertans on and move forward.

Moving on, it says:

The advice is well-intentioned. But local economies, like businesses, often make money selling what’s nearby. Hawaii peddles vacations with warm weather attached. Alberta (along with Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador and northern British Columbia) sells oil and gas.

The oil, gas and mining sector is the largest contributor to Alberta’s economy at 23 per cent of the province’s GDP. That is significant for employment and income. That sector also matters to the provincial budget: resource revenue provides about 24 per cent of the Alberta government’s own-source revenue.

In theory, diversification would allow Albertans to be less reliant on resources. However, it is not clear how Alberta could diversify simply by everyone wishing to that end, including via government policy.

He makes a good point.

What we’re looking at here is that there are going to be things that Alberta has as competitive advantages. We need to be focusing on those competitive advantages to diversify our economy because when we have competitive advantages, you will find that we will be able to find private investors to be able to fund that without risking taxpayer money.

A good example in my constituency is that I was told – and I’m sure that I could be corrected – that in my area there is a competitive advantage for growing hemp. We are in a band where we get the perfect amount of light, and it’s the perfect season for growing hemp. So the government, if they were looking at diversifying Bonnyville-Cold Lake, would look at: how do we get more diversification when it comes to my area? Now, the problem we’ve

got here is that a number of years ago the rail line was taken out of my whole area, so now we don't have a way of being able to transport the different agricultural, grown resources that we've got up in my area. We have no way of getting it out efficiently. That's problematic because what happens is that we will have other industry players in other provinces across Canada that have that access to rail that'll be able to get that hemp out.

A good example would be for the government to be working at finding a diversification plan, trying to work out how to get hemp out of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. We would be looking at maybe bringing more rail back to my constituency, that gives the ability for farmers to get their agriculture to market. That is good for Alberta; that's more diversification. Instead, what we're doing is that we are creating a tax credit for industry that probably would have done it anyway. What happens here is that every time we have a tax credit, that means that fewer royalties, in this case, are going to be collected or less tax income is going to be . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Hon. member, just a reminder. If you could please table your two articles tomorrow.

Mr. Cyr: Okay.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes, I'd like to speak to the amendment. During the discussion here that we've had on this amendment, there was some discussion about consultation and how the government had done extensive consultation on this. I guess I was thinking: okay; if I went to a certain industry and said, "We're thinking of giving you guys a tax credit; what do you think?" I'm going to suggest that they would probably say: "Yes. Yeah. Let's do this. In fact, while you're at it, why don't you get rid of the carbon tax, and we'll save even more money." Of course, that doesn't necessarily mean that this is all good for Albertans because I'm sure we could go to any industry, any business in the province of Alberta and say, "Hey, how would you like to pay less taxes?" and they'd say, "Yes, of course."

What I find a little ironic, I guess, is that when we on this side of the House say that we should have lower taxes here in Alberta and we suggest that that's good, of course, the NDP light their hair on fire, saying, "How could you do that? That's going to cause all these problems, and this is going to be horrible," you know, all the different things that they accuse us of when we talk about lower taxes. But, of course, when the government comes along and says that we're going to lower taxes for these guys and we're going to lower taxes for those guys and we're going to lower taxes for those guys over there, this is diversifying the economy and making life better for Albertans. It just does seem to be a little bit of a double-edged sword there. No, I shouldn't say a double-edged sword. But it just seems to be that one side says, "It's great," and the other side says, "It's horrible."

Now, when we talk about consultation, you know, on this side of the House we had town halls for rural crime. I don't think the government had any. We had town halls for Bill 6. We travelled all across Alberta with Bill 6, having town halls. Did the government have town halls for Bill 6? I don't think so. We had town halls for the parks they were creating on the eastern slopes, for discussions on that. We've covered a lot of ground in Alberta doing consultation when this government, of course, wasn't doing any, except maybe going to certain companies and saying: hey, do you want a tax break? Of course, they say yes, and that's what the government says is consultation. They say: well, if they say it's great, then it's great.

Now, obviously, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talked about that Alberta was the fastest growing economy in Canada. Alberta was the fastest growing economy in Canada. But I looked on the Conference Board of Canada website here, and I actually found out that, unfortunately, that's not true. Alberta actually kind of sits in the middle of the pack, and B.C. and Prince Edward Island are actually the fastest growing provincial economies in 2018. Of course, we would love to see Alberta at the top of that as far as the fastest growing economy, but that's just not the case. Of course, the government keeps talking about this – we hear this almost every day in question period – how fast the economy is growing in Alberta and it's the fastest in Canada, when obviously it's just not true.

5:10

It goes on to say here, "Alberta's economy is performing well but a lack of investment in the energy sector is dimming economic prospects." That's another thing that we talk about on this side of the House. You know, we tell the government, "You're driving away investment." They come back and say: "No, no, no. Investment is just flooding into Alberta. I mean, you wouldn't believe all the investment that's coming in." But, of course, when we pick an organization that's not involved politically, the Conference Board of Canada, they actually support our view, that the investment isn't flooding into Alberta like the government suggests. Now, it goes on to say here, "While Alberta bounced back from recession in 2017 growing by 4.9 per cent, economic growth is expected to be weaker this year, at 1.9 per cent."

Now, Madam Speaker, once the government had driven the economy to the very bottom that they possibly could drive it, then there was actually nowhere for it to go but up. When you have 4.9 per cent growth, that's actually – well, it's good. We're not going to complain about having 4.9 per cent growth. But the only reason that it was 4.9 per cent growth is because they'd driven it so far down. It had nowhere to go but up.

I also wanted to mention, too, that this government, during the economic downturn, of course, blamed the price of oil. The price of oil has a lot of effect in Alberta. We agree with that, that the price of oil does have a great effect on our economy. We never blamed the government for the price of oil going down, but we do blame the government for how they reacted to it and the different things that they did to make matters worse at that time. Of course, the price of oil goes down. The government says: it's not our fault. Agreed. But when the price of oil goes up, I mean, emergency rooms are flooded with NDP members with dislocated shoulders trying to pat themselves on the back. It just doesn't make any sense, how this government can sit here and when the price of oil goes down, "Not our fault"; when the price of oil goes up, the economy comes back a bit: "Hey, thank us. We're here. Just pat us on the back and turn us loose here." I think there are some things here that just don't make sense.

Now, we want diversification in our economy, but it doesn't always take government intervention to get there. In fact, all we have to do is that we have to create a business-friendly environment in Alberta – that's what we need to do, create a business-friendly environment – so businesses will come to Alberta, invest money, take their jobs and everything and move them here so that Albertans can be employed and working. Of course, what happens when you do that is that the economy builds naturally. These businesses will come in and set up business. They don't need to be paid to come in and do business in Alberta. They can come to Alberta and know that they're going to make money, and they'll bring their investment here, bring the jobs here. That's how you diversify the economy, but of course this government figures that they have to interfere with everything.

Now, we talk about a business-friendly environment. Well, a business-friendly environment doesn't include things like a carbon tax, that our neighbouring jurisdictions don't have, the places that we have to compete with. Like, these companies compete in a global market, and if we don't have, you know, an opportunity to show them that they can come in and do business and make as much or more money than anywhere else, they're going to go somewhere else. So we have to give that opportunity to do that.

Another problem we have here is regulations. We've got companies that want to bring investment to the province, and when they go to set up, of course, they're met with barriers and years and years and thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars to set up their businesses.

Madam Speaker, that's what we need to do. Bill 2 is obviously something where it's meant to try to force investment to happen when really it could happen naturally if we just create that business-friendly environment in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will now call the question on the amendment.

[The voice vote indicated that motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cyr	Hanson	Nixon
Ellis	Loewen	Panda
Fraser	McIver	Schneider

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	McKittrick	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment HA1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we will now call the question on third reading.

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

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

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miranda
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Carlier	Horne	Nielsen
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	Mason	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sucha
Ganley	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard

Against the motion:

Cyr	Hanson	Panda
Ellis	Loewen	Schneider
Fraser	Nixon	

Totals:	For – 33	Against – 8
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[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Government Motion 20 at this time I would like to notify the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting today.

Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate June 5: Ms Ganley]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. There are some very interesting aspects of this bill, interesting in the sense that the minister did not need this bill to do what she intends to do. The minister already has the power to do what Bill 1 does. This reminds me of another Bill 1 from another session, one in which that Bill 1 outlined the Minister of Economic Development and Trade's job description. Bill 1 is symbolic and symptomatic of the NDP government and the policy choices it's making.

5:50

The NDP went to great lengths before bringing in Bill 1 by striking a committee – yes, another committee, Madam Speaker – and this one is the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. It was stood up on October 13, 2016, and the membership was made up of several people, including Jeanette Patell from GE, Gil McGowan from the Alberta Federation of Labour, Leo de Bever – that member only lasted until March 13, 2017 – Warren Fraleigh, Carol Moen, Marie Robidoux, and Rocky Sinclair. It makes me wonder why Leo de Bever only lasted five months on this committee.

All manner of recommendations came forward, but only a subset of recommendations made the cut into Bill 1. Although there were many more recommendations, only a subset made it into Bill 1. It was the recommendations that played to the NDP stereotype – grants, loans, and loan guarantees – and the NDP's big-spending ways. Yeah, Madam Speaker, this government is willing to give billions to corporations but doesn't want to bring natural gas to La Crête. I don't know why, but they can't get it.

Yet there are other recommendations that could have been chosen that would have had a greater impact on the petrochemical sector in Alberta. I actually like the petrochemical sector because at the beginning of my career I started at Reliance, which built over a

period of time the world's largest petrochemical complexes, in India, actually.

The recommendations of this EDAC committee include – I'll read some of them.

Recommendation 3.1:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta strive for the same levels of regulatory transparency, efficiency and predictability in the downstream [same] as in the upstream.

Recommendation 3.2:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta ensure regulatory timelines are in line with comparable jurisdictions such as Texas and Louisiana, while not compromising Alberta's high standards.

Recommendation 3.4:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta work with industry to support timely review processes by exploring opportunities to reduce duplication of efforts, use existing data and create shared value by bringing the environmental assessment process more fully into the digital age.

Recommendation 3.5:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta, as part of its land management policies, take steps to enable preapproval of project sites and/or zones within existing or emerging downstream energy clusters.

Recommendation 4 of EDAC's report reads:

EDAC supports the concept of establishing new infrastructure and energy corridors around existing or likely sites for downstream energy clusters – in particular, Alberta's Industrial Heartland, Joffre, Grande Prairie and Medicine Hat.

Recommendation 7.2 of EDAC's report says:

Due to the fact that Alberta's downstream energy industry relies on rail access for its movement of product, EDAC recommends the Alberta government continue to lead on advocacy for equitable rail services that address the needs of downstream energy industry players in regards to access, cost and reliability, with active participation by downstream energy industry representatives.

In 7.4 it says:

Seek the permanent extension of the existing accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers such as the petrochemical industry to provide certainty to those interested in investing in the downstream.

Madam Speaker, these policy options were not chosen by this NDP government. Instead, we have grants, loans, and loan guarantees, and the industry smiles politely and says: hurray. Who doesn't want money? The Energy minister and the economic development minister and everyone in this House told us that their Bill 1 is based on the recommendations from the EDAC report. Now, I've read so many of them which have suggested alternate ways to help the industry, to grow the economy and bring jobs, but the NDP government conveniently ignored them, and they just chose the handouts.

Meanwhile just yesterday the executive director of Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association had something to say. Lynette Tremblay said, quote: globally integrated companies do not necessarily need repayable loans from government. End quote. Madam Speaker, it looks like the NDP might be getting this wrong if the organization that stands to benefit the most from new investment in petrochemicals in Alberta is not liking the policy tool chosen by this NDP government.

Lynette went on to say that Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association is, quote: also advocating for more competitive capital cost allowance; Canada's 50 per cent deduction for capital cost depreciation is only available until 2025 while the United States has implemented a permanent 100 per cent capital cost allowance. End quote. This capital cost allowance at 100 per cent was placed in President Trump's last budget, and Wall Street loved it. EDAC recommended it, too, but there's nothing here in this Bill 1 about that particular recommendation.

The executive director of the Industrial Heartland Association went on to point out, quote: additionally, recent corporate tax cuts in the States have resulted in a 21 per cent tax compared to Alberta's 27 per cent corporate tax, 12 per cent provincially and 15 per cent federally. Madam Speaker, our federal and provincial taxes are out of synchronization with the U.S.A.; again, not the variable but certainly a variable.

Madam Speaker, also, there was a quote from the heartland association. Basically, they want a reduction in red tape and regulatory times; again, a recommendation from EDAC but not found in Bill 1.

Further issues plague Canada's investment attraction such as the B.C.-Alberta pipeline dispute. Foreign investors take a look at the pipeline dispute. Quote: the signals that we send globally do impact our sector regardless of what the nature of the dispute is. So it's really important that the perceptions of Alberta and Canada are that we welcome investment, that it is easy to do business here, and that we recognize the benefit to the community. The pipeline fight is creating uncertainty.

You know what else is creating uncertainty? The federal carbon pricing being layered on top of provincial carbon taxes. Madam Speaker, if you remember, Shell has decided to invest in Pennsylvania over Alberta, and they're constructing a \$6 billion ethane cracker facility estimated to create 6,000 construction jobs and 600 operational jobs in Pennsylvania but not in Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House will now stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875