



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, October 30, 2018

Day 42

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
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Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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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)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Morning.

Let us reflect. As members of the Alberta Legislature may our primary concern always be the welfare of all of our people, and may we fulfill our office with honesty, integrity, and mutual respect.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

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

Morning Sitting Adjournment

28. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that on Thursday, November 8, 2018, the morning sitting of the Assembly stand adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[Government Motion 28 carried]

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

Adjournment of Fall Session

31. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 29th Legislature, Fourth Session, 2018 fall sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

[Government Motion 31 carried]

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

Adjournment of Fall Session

32. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 29th Legislature, Fourth Session, 2018 fall sitting of the Assembly be extended beyond the first Thursday in December until such time as or when the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded, and at such time the Assembly stands adjourned.

[Government Motion 32 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 8

Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise today and move second reading of Bill 8, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018.

In the past few years Alberta has seen an increasing number of catastrophic disasters and local emergencies. All members are well aware of the significant impacts to personal lives, property, and community that result from these events. We all saw how Albertans fled Fort McMurray in 2016, when the Beast tore through their community. We saw how Calgary and High River and Canmore and many other southern Alberta communities were inundated by water after unprecedented rain in 2013. And we all saw how Slave Lake was affected after wildfire swept into the town in 2011. While these events were the big ones, there have been many other disasters that have affected Alberta communities over the years as well, from north to south, from east to west. Each event required action from local responders and municipalities to get people out of harm's way and to protect property to the greatest extent possible.

When the fire is put out and the water recedes, we take the opportunity to learn from the incident: how the response was handled, what went well, what could have been done better. For the larger events we hire an independent third party to conduct a formal postincident assessment and make recommendations for improvement. Madam Speaker, many of the proposed amendments you see in Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, would implement recommendations from these reviews.

Most of what the members will see in the bill are behind-the-scenes items, so to speak. The proposed changes to the act focus on technical aspects of how municipalities and first responders handle emergencies. One result will be safer conditions for first responders and Albertans under evacuation orders, another would clarify how dispute resolution is used when property is damaged during a response, and another would establish the authority to create a new regulation that further clarifies emergency management roles and responsibilities with local authorities. Bill 8 will also make several other clarifying and technical amendments. Ultimately, all these proposed amendments will lead to stronger, more efficient responses to future emergencies.

Members will recall that Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, was introduced this past spring. We then hit the pause button to consult with our partners across this great province on the legislation and the new local authority emergency management regulation. Over the summer the Alberta Emergency Management Agency engaged municipalities, first responders, and other stakeholders. We held in-person sessions in 11 communities across the province, which were participated in by 174 stakeholders from 92 municipalities. We talked to them about the bill and also about considerations that will be laid out in further, future regulations. Specifically, we spoke with municipally elected officials, municipal and First Nations administrators, directors of emergency management, and law enforcement.

We focused our engagement on these stakeholders as the proposed changes deal with the way municipalities and first responders handle emergencies. The goal is to find out whether the updated emergency management framework would give them clear direction on what they need to do to prepare for an emergency and then to respond. Although events like this are becoming more common, dealing with large-scale emergencies is not something local authorities have to deal with on a regular basis, so it is important to know if we are hitting the mark on clear roles and responsibilities with stakeholders. The answer is yes. Most importantly, stakeholders agreed that these proposed changes will move the ball forward towards a stronger emergency management framework in our province.

Madam Speaker, we have seen an increasing number of disasters impacting Albertans, and we have a duty to protect residents of this province when disaster strikes. The best way to manage emergency response is to be prepared well before emergencies happen. I'm proud to say that Bill 8 will result in a safer, more prepared, and more resilient Alberta. I'm proud to move this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Perfect. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak about the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. Alberta is a very scenic and beautiful province, and it has been devastated by an increasingly frequent string of natural disasters. We've seen fires ravage the north, the west, and the south and floods overwhelm most of the towns in between. Alberta quite literally has seen hell and high water over the last 10-year period. Albertans have a beautiful capacity to care for one another, selflessly help those who may not be able to do so for themselves, and persevere through any and all trying times. Not all that long ago Calgarians were standing knee deep in floodwater, lending a hand to strangers whose homes were impacted.

As grateful as we are for our supportive communities, that rally in the face of adversity, the highest praise and gratitude goes to our emergency personnel, who work around the clock in these disasters to ensure the safety of the public and that no one gets left behind, including pets. This is why it is so crucial that these personnel are given the power and authority to carry out what they are mandated to do.

Not only must we ensure the safety of each individual who's impacted by a wildfire, flood, and any other circumstances that necessitate a mandatory evacuation order; we also have a duty to ensure that those risking their own lives for the sake of the community are not putting themselves in harm's way. When an individual has been told that he must evacuate and that danger is impending and the individual decides not to heed the orders, the emergency personnel would then have to return under much more dangerous circumstances to try to get everyone to safety, placing a higher risk on their own lives as well as the individual's. A firefighter, for example, when making his initial evacuation order rounds and a ravaging wildfire is incipient, should not risk the loss of his own life to return to a house that he has already visited which is now engulfed in flames, putting additional lives at risk due to another person's stubbornness.

Although it may still be the case that some may choose not to leave their homes when a mandatory evacuation order comes into effect, this bill clarifies the liability in that circumstance. This places more responsibility on Albertans to heed evacuation orders and take seriously all advised precautions as they are now liable when they choose to act recklessly. Furthermore, this bill allows municipalities to become more effective in their local emergency management through their emergency advisory committee and other local authorities.

10:10

However, not all municipalities will be benefited by the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. This legislation can impose a burden on the smallest communities, who do not have the resources, both in terms of money and people, to apply the necessary regulations of this act. In fact, this legislation, together with the Municipal Government Act, may overwhelm certain small towns that cannot take on this additional imposed cost and perhaps

even make them consider dissolution. It can be unfeasible for certain towns to impose the necessary responsibilities described in this bill, and the additional cost can render the municipality to be in an unstable position.

However, municipalities are expected to be better prepared for disastrous situations, which will ultimately serve the community and ensure the safety of their residents. This amendment allows the minister to decide on a minimal level of training requirements and ensures that their elected officials and municipal staff have a basic level of understanding of emergency protocols. Additionally, it is not enough that officials and staff are knowledgeable about the procedures of an emergency situation; they must also be aware of their roles and responsibilities before and after an emergency. Having a standardized training requirement across municipalities will effectively end the existing patchwork of training across Alberta and will ensure that there are no gaps in knowledge or practice when faced with a relentless natural disaster.

Instead of the patchwork, it is beneficial to have a framework for what each municipality's emergency plan must include and that they continue to update those plans regularly. When the time comes to put into immediate action the emergency plan, that is not the time to be realizing a flaw that has been overlooked. There is no worse time to realize that your municipal staff is unprepared or underprepared than when a disaster strikes. That is why standardizing across the board not only the plan but also the mock disaster exercises and requirements and frequencies is vital to ensuring the preparedness of the individuals whose lives will depend upon it.

Although this will increase the effectiveness of the emergency preparedness plans across the majority of the province, there is still the challenge of the smallest municipalities implementing this. We have not heard these concerns addressed, and this has caused some uncertainty. The requirement for municipalities to conduct annual or biannual emergency management exercises, although it is an absolute necessity for big cities and towns, can prove ultimately quite difficult for small municipalities, which may struggle to put together the resources. It seems to me that the purpose of this bill has been to improve regional collaboration between towns and ensure that appropriate and adequate requirements are clearly communicated throughout the region, though that still leaves me with the question of how small municipalities will be able to comply with this bill.

Finally, I'm happy to hear that the dispute resolution mechanism will not be used to decide whether or not an individual is eligible for funding following a disaster but, rather, the amount. This will be when property is damaged by the municipality or province in their response to the disaster rather than the disaster itself.

To conclude, I'm still uncertain about how this bill will affect the smallest municipalities, especially in the northern and rural areas of the province, and whether this will lead some of them to consider dissolution. However, I am glad to see that the standardization of safety plans and requirements for preparedness will be ensured as well as regional collaboration and putting safety of firefighters as a priority. That is why I'll be supporting the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, today.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to rise today in support of Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. Over the past few years, as has been discussed before, Alberta has seen an increasing number of

catastrophic disasters and local emergencies. I know that in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane this is something that's all too familiar to folks because we live in, you know, a large rural area that's surrounded by trees and rivers and we are at risk of lots of different kinds of natural disasters in terms of forest fires, flooding, drought, and that kind of thing. We have a lot of urban-wildlife interfaces where people come into conflict sometimes with natural disasters just based on the proximity of their communities to these wild spaces.

You know, over the last summer, in the Bow Valley and even in Calgary there was a lot of smoke from the wildfires in British Columbia. This was something that kept natural disasters at the front of mind for constituents, and I know that a lot of people reached out to my office to ask: "Are we prepared? If the smoke comes closer and the fire approaches our community, are we prepared to act and be ready if this disaster comes closer to us?" The answer is yes. We've got very dedicated first responders and emergency management professionals that were ready to act at a moment's notice. But we also know from some of the reviews that we've done, based on past disasters, that there are some improvements that we can make. We can always learn and do better, and this bill aims to do exactly that.

I'm sure that my fellow members are really well aware of the significant impact to personal lives, to property, businesses, and communities that can result from these events, and we also know the way that it can impact our constituents. I know that after the floods of 2013 it's very common for people, especially in the spring – any time it starts raining, people get nervous because they're not quite sure if we're going to see the same kind of conditions that we did during the 2013 floods. That uncertainty is what can lead to mental health conditions. You know, it can sometimes make people leave communities entirely because of how traumatic it has been to go through those. So we owe it to those people to make sure that we're doing everything we can to prepare for emergencies and respond appropriately when they do happen.

For example, you know, we saw how in Calgary, High River, Canmore, Bragg Creek, Redwood Meadows, and many other southern Alberta communities we were inundated by water after the rain in 2013, and quite honestly, Madam Speaker, that event is something that inspired me to put my name forward to run to represent the constituents of Banff-Cochrane. I was incredibly inspired by how constituents just rolled up their sleeves and helped complete strangers clean out their basement. It showed how resilient our communities are and how dedicated Albertans are to helping one another. Even in the most extreme circumstances, when a neighbour may have lost their home, they're willing to go and help their neighbour clean out their basement and help put their lives back together when they're going through extremely stressful times. That really inspired me to want to step up and help ensure that we have the resources that we need, that the government is there to support those communities when they're going through these difficult circumstances.

You know, we've seen that all across the province, in places like Slave Lake after the wildfire there in 2011 and the same with Fort McMurray just recently. These events are the big ones that attract national and world-wide attention, but there are many other disasters that have affected communities over the years all across and in all four corners of the province. Each of those events always requires actions from local responders and the municipalities that are involved to make sure people get out of harm's way and to protect property to the greatest extent possible.

When the fire is put out and the water recedes, we always take the opportunity to learn from that incident: how the response was handled, what worked well, and what we can improve on. For the

larger events the government always hires an independent third party to conduct a formal postincident assessment and make those recommendations for improvement. Madam Speaker, the proposed amendments that you see in Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, would implement the recommendations from those reviews.

Most of what members will see in the bill are sort of – I suppose you could categorize them as behind-the-scenes items. Sometimes the really flashy things get put out in public. You know, we make sure we have fire trucks and boots on the ground, and those are absolutely important. But how we co-ordinate those things behind the scenes and the rules that pertain to emergency management response are also extremely important. The proposed changes to the act focus on these more technical aspects about how municipalities and first responders handle those emergencies.

That said, this bill would achieve many important updates. One result of the bill being passed would be safer conditions for first responders and Albertans under evacuation orders. I'd just like to speak a little bit about how relevant this is to my constituency. For example, places like Banff, Canmore, and Lake Louise are largely populated by tourists, and they see about 4 million tourists and visitors a year. When you're dealing with these kinds of volumes of people, when emergencies happen, it's critical to have a response plan, to be well co-ordinated. You know, tourists come from other jurisdictions, and they might not always know the best evacuation routes or how to get away from danger.

10:20

You know, one prime example is that in the summer season there are so many tourists that flock to places like Moraine Lake, for example. The parking lot is full by about 8 o'clock in the morning, and they constantly run buses from the overflow parking lot. You've got this wild area where you've got people scattered throughout a large geographic region, and you've also got a bit of a bottleneck. In terms of if people had to evacuate, you've got thousands of people who are trying to get through a single road. Making sure that our first responders have the tools that they need to undertake an evacuation under these challenging conditions is absolutely essential.

You know, when I think of this, I think of visiting the Lake Louise fire department just recently. This little fire department is really a scrappy fire department that punches way above their weight. It's primarily composed of volunteer members, and these members every Tuesday, I believe it is, go and train. They count inventory in the fire department to make sure that they know where all the equipment is and that they're prepared to respond to these emergencies. They do this out of a really small fire department, that's based in one of the Parks Canada buildings there, and despite not having the ideal circumstances, where they'd like to be situated, it's remarkable to see what this department has achieved and the dedication of their members.

These members – and not just these members, for instance; it's all volunteer firefighters, for that matter – spend their own money for increased training to make sure that they have the skills that they require to respond to these kinds of things. I know the members in the Lake Louise fire department contributed their own money to buy a Lifepak defibrillator machine, that can help save lives. It's been successful. To see these people spend their own time and their own money on these things – for us to be able to help them do their job by making sure that this kind of management co-ordination is taking place behind the scenes is extremely valuable.

Another part of the bill would help clarify how dispute resolution is being used if there's property damage that occurs during a response. One of the other aspects of the bill would establish the

authority to create a new regulation that further clarifies emergency management roles and responsibilities of local authorities. There are also some clarifying and technical amendments. Ultimately, all of these proposed amendments are going to lead to stronger and more efficient responses to future emergencies.

You know, we know that this bill was introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs back in the spring in first reading, and that allowed us to go out over the summer and speak to affected municipalities and stakeholders about the bill to make sure that the proposed changes have gone towards meeting the needs that they've expressed.

I just wanted to talk a little bit more about the kind of preparedness that does happen behind the scenes that I've been privileged to witness. Just a few weeks ago in Canmore I was invited to participate and watch a sprinkler training exercise. Earlier on I mentioned how a lot of communities in my constituency have a wildland-urban interface, so the forest is butting up right against residential neighbourhoods. In Canmore this is especially true in terms of – you know, you've got these beautiful neighbourhoods nestled amongst the trees. What makes it so beautiful also makes it a little bit risky and dangerous. What the Canmore fire department did in combination with the provincial government and emergency response planners was go out and set up sprinklers to kind of fend off fires from encroaching on that wildland-urban interface.

I was up in the Eagle Crescent area of Canmore. For those not familiar with Canmore, the terrain there is quite steep. I was watching these firefighters carry, you know, gigantic fire hoses, I think six at a time, up these steep slopes to set up sprinklers to test how well they would work and where they ought to be situated. I was blown away by the fitness and dedication of these members. Like, just walking up the hill myself, not carrying anything but my jacket, I was out of breath, and then I saw these firefighters basically running up the hill carrying all these hoses. For them to be able to spend that much time to be in shape to do things like that is pretty remarkable.

You know, the other thing that they wanted to test with the steep terrain around there is whether the fire hydrants and the pumps can push enough water uphill in order to get enough water to make the sprinklers work. I believe the sprinklers are about every 50 feet or 100 feet apart, and there's a gigantic line of sprinklers on the water supply. So to make sure that the water can pump uphill and have the pressure that's required was part of this exercise. They looked at solutions like putting in different types of valves so that once the line is primed and you've got the water up the hill, if you need to disconnect for some reason, you don't lose the pressure in the line. You can disconnect, do what you need to do, reconnect, and the hose is still primed. These are all the kinds of things that run through the minds of first responders.

I'm always so impressed by the dedication and professionalism of these heroes, who work all the time to keep our communities safe. I'm extremely proud that we're doing what we can to make sure that first responders and emergency professionals are well equipped, have the kind of equipment that they need in the first place but also the technical details in the background that make their job safer. When we can evacuate people and make sure that people aren't in harm's way, those first responders don't need to focus on evacuating people; they can focus on addressing the emergency situation as it requires.

This bill accomplishes those things. It is based on lessons that we've learned from other emergencies. I'm very proud to be supporting this bill and really thankful to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for the work he's done and his department has done on this. I'd encourage all members to support the bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. I think this is an important piece of legislation. Certainly, all legislation needs to be reviewed on a somewhat regular basis, so the fact that we're doing this, I think, is helpful. No one plans emergencies, but everyone should plan for a response to emergencies when they occur. This is an attempt to be working towards that to make sure both our plans and our regulations will be effective. All too often, like how great thunderclouds arise in clear, blue Alberta summer skies, sometimes emergencies just arise out of the blue, so to speak. We certainly need to be prepared, and we need to plan for them.

My own experience in emergency management includes about eight years of volunteering with B.C. Search and Rescue and also several years as the communications official for a municipal emergency management team here in Alberta. In B.C. under Search and Rescue I served in the northwest, one of the most active regions. We had many call-outs a year. I've had the opportunity to work not only in the control centre for training under RCMP authority but also to take CASARA, Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, training and spend many hours with SAR techs in a Buffalo searching for downed aircraft. I've done mountain rescue and cliff rescue training, helicopter hover and exit training, and diver support training. I've had a lot of opportunities to participate in this. Of course, in Alberta I had the opportunity to do the provincial training for communications for local emergency management and a number of tabletop exercises, leading and participating in those as well. I do think preparedness is extremely important. Preparedness is something that needs to be rehearsed on a regular basis.

I support this bill and its intent. Hopefully, it will help us in Alberta to respond in more effective and efficient ways when the unexpected disasters do come upon us. As has already been said by the speakers before me, Alberta has had an increasing number of large-scale natural disasters and emergencies that we do need to truly be prepared for. I'm not going to re-enumerate them, because they already have been, but just say that in each one of those cases, when things have happened, there's always been a follow-up report, and there have always been a large number of comments about how things could have been done better, how things should have been planned for or anticipated in a better way. It's my hope and my desire that some of those comments and some of those recommendations are what we are seeing come forward in this bill.

10:30

I think the government did the right thing in taking the summer to consult. Hopefully, we will hear the details of some of that consultation as we move through the stages of this bill because I think that many of the people that are directly involved on the ground do gain insights and experiences that should be extremely helpful to us. Hopefully, we will see some amendments and some feedback that will address some of those concerns that have been raised repeatedly. I do say "repeatedly" on purpose because sometimes the same recommendations have come up after various events, and we do need to enact some of those things.

Yes, the consultation period is good, and here we are, and I think we should proceed. Even though many of the municipalities and regions currently have some practices and policies that fall in line with some of these new requirements – and my credit goes to them for their work in that – the reality is that we need a consistent

approach across municipalities, and we need to make sure that everyone understands what their roles and purposes are and how they can attain the highest level of performance when it's most needed.

I think we're endeavouring to do the right thing here. I do have some concerns about how the smaller municipalities will be both considered and enabled because that is a challenge for some of them, to be able to have the resources, both in terms of human capital and also in terms of financial resources, to be able to actually respond to some of these things.

Let me speak to some of the details of the bill. Under the authority to establish the local authority emergency management regulation, there are some changes here, that I think will be helpful, to add some additional clarity, some guidance to municipalities as they're trying to figure out what they should and shouldn't be doing in terms of both their bylaws and their staff training and different things like that. Currently there are some high-level guidelines, some high-level requirements and responsibilities, but a little bit more detail there may be helpful as long as we understand that every community is different. Quite frankly, in my experience, every emergency is different.

While the intent to create uniform guidelines is helpful, we need to be careful that we don't go just a little bit too far and create a straitjacket that limits the ability for local responders to address the uniqueness and the complexity of whatever comes at them because there's no way we can ever anticipate everything that could arise in an emergency. But, hopefully, it will improve the authorities' response time, their ability to declare a local state of emergency, their ability to be prepared for emergency before these things start to play out. That's the goal.

Under evacuation orders – next I'd like to speak to that – currently the Emergency Management Act allows the minister or a local authority to order evacuations during a state of emergency or a state of local emergency. This will be amended somewhat to clarify that people are required to comply with an evacuation order when it is made and that it's illegal to fail to leave an area that is under an evacuation order. There are lots of reason, I suppose, why this needs enforcement although I'm not sure what the actual consequences might be there for people who do still choose to remain. There is a challenge sometimes with people who do remain, not in every case, but sometimes they put themselves or, more importantly, maybe even their families in grave danger. Sometimes they cause the diversion of scarce resources and attention away from the actual emergency response. So there is a danger for people sometimes staying.

On the other hand, I would warn that from the municipality, the local authority's point of view, I think there needs to be some clarification and guidance as to when and when not to create a state of emergency officially, because sometimes, quite frankly – I've been close enough to some of this to hear the conversations – the local authorities create it simply as a precautionary measure because they're afraid of a potential liability or they're concerned about potential public response – “Why didn't you call a state of emergency?” – when, in fact, maybe it was a bit premature. Sometimes to do it, I will say, as a precautionary measure or out of fear of liability is not maybe necessarily the right thing for the people of a region.

And then, of course, the issue that has been raised recently as well: if that's the case, what happens with the care of animals? People's pets, people's livestock: are they to be abandoned if we enforce this in strict ways? Are we then as a province taking on the responsibility of caring for those animals as well, which would add a great deal of responsibility to emergency responders, that currently I don't think has been thought through very carefully?

I think we need to be careful about when these things are put into place, and I think that municipal, local officials could use some help and some guidance about when and when not to actually create a state of emergency. Currently the evacuation orders can be declared and a resident who refuses to comply with the mandatory evacuation will not actually be forcibly removed from their property simply because a mandatory evacuation order is in effect. I think that's one of the things that might be worth a little bit of conversation during Committee of the Whole.

Under the dispute resolution piece, changes will clarify which types of dispute may be taken to arbitration. I think this is helpful. Disputes are always difficult, and clarifying that up front as much as possible is really helpful. Clarifying that it's really about the amount of compensation, not whether or not one is eligible for compensation, might help a lot of people understand what they can ask for and what they can't or whether they're even able to do that. It is about not so much the damage caused by the actual natural event but damage that may be caused or necessarily caused by responders trying to deal with the issue.

For instance, a specific detail in Fort McMurray. I know at one point the fire chief showed us that there were a couple of houses that were in a critical location in order for them to try and create a firebreak and prevent the spread of the fire to the rest of the city, and they actually just bulldozed those houses under the emergency management authority. They had full authority to do it. I'm not questioning that they should have done it. But then the question arises: who pays for that, and what is the amount that gets paid when somebody's house, under that act, gets bulldozed? These kinds of difficult situations definitely arise, and some clarity in compensation and these kinds of things certainly would be helpful.

Some other positive changes to the act regarding the emergency advisory committees: those changes, I think, will also provide more detail and direction and, as well, provide consistency across municipalities. I think this is important. Currently the Emergency Management Act requires a municipality to have an emergency advisory committee consisting of elected officials. The changes will be that the regulation may provide additional guidance around creating these advisory committees, specifically regarding roles and responsibilities of the committee. I believe this will help streamline the process and involve more collaboration on the part of all the communities. It will also increase consistency and effectiveness of local authority emergency advisory committees.

Other changes to the management agencies and regulations will help clarify the requirements for the agencies that will ensure that municipalities are able to lead in an emergency response and implement the direction of the emergency advisory committee. I think these things will be helpful.

Another change regarding regional collaboration will help ensure appropriate, adequate, and clearly understood mechanisms for regional collaboration. That is extremely important. I know that in my particular area the cities, the villages, the towns, the counties work very well together, and oftentimes a lot of that has to do with just personality and willingness to work together and a sharing attitude. But the truth is that we sometimes need some guidance for that, and outlining sort of where and when and how to do these things, I think, will do nothing but improve the ability of, particularly, smaller areas, who need assistance, who depend on partnership agreements for equipment and for staffing, in some cases for emergency responders. I think this will be extremely helpful for smaller communities, and it needs to happen.

10:40

The regional services commission will be part of that, a joint committee representing two or more local authorities. Summer

villages may delegate their coverage to local authorities. These kinds of agreements, I think, are important, especially when an emergency is about to unfold and people are looking across jurisdictions at each other and nobody is quite sure whether they want to or not. It's too late to figure out those kinds of commitments when fires are burning, when floods are happening, tornadoes are blowing. We need to be ready to go.

These new proposed regulations will allow municipalities to enter into their regional collaboration agreements and stipulate which particular emerging managing powers and duties are being delegated to who or being shared with who or being provided by who. I think the requirement to establish sort of these transborder agreements within the province will be very helpful.

I think it's good to see that also there will be additional training, mandatory training. I've done hours and hours and hours of various kinds of training for emergency management, and you can never train enough. Anybody who's in a fire hall trains constantly, so I think that at the municipal level as well, training is extremely important. Even just taking time to rehearse the potential emergencies we might face, what would be our potential response, doing tabletop exercises, doing larger exercises: these things are extremely important.

I just trust that the new act, the amended act, is not going to just place a burden upon municipalities of expectation but also help them to be resourced and able to do that. They need expertise, on the one hand; they need resources, on the other hand. These things need to be backed up with the required support to actually make them have a real life.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my great privilege to rise in the House this morning to speak in favour of Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. I'd like just one moment to congratulate our Minister of Municipal Affairs for making sure that there was time in the legislative session to take care of this very important business. You know, it's great to be part of a government that is always responsive and is always taking its obligations to the people of Alberta seriously, and I think this is another instance of that.

I have to say that I'm personally grateful to see, you know, these types of improvements being contemplated. Like the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, I also represent northeastern Alberta, and it seems that we've had more than our fair share of disasters in the last several years. Personally, as an insurance agent I got a very close, ringside seat to the Slave Lake fire in 2011 and got to see some of the good things emergency responders of the province did in terms of disaster relief and recovery but then also some of the issues that arose as well.

My very first act as a sworn-in MLA actually was the June 2 – I think we got sworn in in 2015. There was a big fire up in the Wabasca area that very evening, and residents of the Big Stone area were evacuated to Calling Lake, which is in my riding, and then as well to Athabasca. It was definitely a quick education in, you know, what the roles of elected officials are in these types of situations. Then, of course, I live in Boyle, and Boyle is midpoint between Fort McMurray and Edmonton and was one of the major destinations during the Fort McMurray fire.

Wandering River is also in my riding. During that disaster, which, of course, in our neck of the woods and, I think, for the

whole province was unprecedented in its scope and the number of people impacted, I think people really went above and beyond. I mean, that was not only the emergency responders, of course, but also local residents and citizens. At the same time there were a lot of things that went really well.

You know, there were other things that maybe gave cause for concern. For example, in terms of the number of people who got stranded on highway 63, part of the issue was that there was no fuel replacement, so basically people were running out of gas along the way. In fact, in Boyle we had to wake up the bulk fuel drivers from the local co-op to get fuel shipped up there, and I know they did the same thing in Plamondon. A lot of that response went that way. I know the Wandering River fire department emptied out all of their deep freezes, and I think they gave out all the food and water. I don't think there was a scrap of anything left in Wandering River by the next morning. Now, this is all great, but these were ad hoc responses, but I think that's entirely understandable considering just the scope and breadth of what happened there.

I think we have to come to a realization that with the change in climate and with more energy being put into the climate system with, you know, springs coming earlier, hotter, and drier, we have to expect the unexpected now. We can't even really call it unexpected, whether it's more frequent and stronger floods, whether it's more frequent – and we'll expect the tornadoes that the member talked about, and especially in our neck of the woods forest fires that burn hotter and burn faster and go further than what we've seen before. We really need to pick up our game, and that's not because we haven't had an excellent program in place, but as the need and demand goes up, so needs our response.

I think this is the right path, and I know that this is something that, you know, I'd say that our predecessors were good about doing as well. I mean, for example, after the Slave Lake fire they had the Flat Top Complex regulations and consultation that went out, and that kind of assisted. I think if they hadn't gone through that process, Fort McMurray would have been even more of a challenge.

But we also have a lot to learn from recent experience. You know, how do you learn from experience? Well, you don't just learn – and this comes from my background as an adult educator. Nobody learns just from experience. You can do the same stupid thing over and over and over again if you don't stop to reflect on that experience, so you learn from reflection on experience. That's why these types of processes of taking stock and going over what went well, what didn't go well, how we can do things better are so important. It's also really important to broaden the scope of who you talk to because a problem that all of us as human beings face is that we don't know what we don't know. Unless we talk to enough people, we just simply won't know what we're missing, so broad-based consultation is always better than just sticking to just the narrow, top experts.

You know, I'm very glad to see that the process that this bill comes out of went through that and actually went through the iterative process fairly similar to the process we used when amending the Municipal Government Act. Once again, that's a complex, very important piece of legislation, a lot of players, a lot of different wisdoms and experiences to draw on, and Municipal Affairs did a great job in that, in making sure that people that had things to offer had that opportunity. I'm glad to see that the same thing happened here in Bill 8. Having it introduced into the spring session but then available for consultation over the summer, I think, was really helpful in making it more of a robust piece of legislation. I think that's it so far.

I just want to also reiterate some of the other comments. I don't think you can overstate just how important it is to be organized and clear, where people are specific about their roles and their

obligations and where the resources are for when disaster strikes because, like I said, having been ringside for that type of situation, if you don't know what you're doing, you know – it's why they talk about the fog of war. I think there's a sort of fog of disaster that might be quite similar. You don't know who's doing what, where they're doing it, where you can find what you need, and meanwhile you've got demands, and people are yelling for this and yelling for that.

10:50

What happens is you can have people working at crosspurposes. You can have unanticipated gaps in coverage and in services. And that doesn't reflect on how well meaning, how brave, how giving the individuals involved are; it's simply a factor of the situation that they find themselves in. You're never going to be able to eliminate all the unpredictabilities in a situation, but the more you can do on that score, the better. The more you can have clarity, the more you can avoid role conflict, the more you can avoid jurisdictional battles or jurisdictional sloughing off, the better you're going to be. I think that the parts I'd like to highlight for the emergency management regulation speak directly to that because, of course, in Alberta municipalities do have a lot of responsibilities in the event of an emergency under the present act. Setting out what the responsibilities are in regulation, I think, will really help clarify and provide greater direction for them on just what is required for them to plan for disasters and to properly and appropriately prepare for the response if a disaster strikes.

I think, like I said, talking about how we're going into this new world of bigger and more frequent disasters, it's not necessarily going to be the case that there's just going to be one disaster at a time. I think this is something that we came pretty close to experiencing ourselves in the summer of 2016, when the whole province was bone dry and we had almost all our resources focused up in Wood Buffalo. I think it was a matter of luck that we did not have other complications that could have taxed us beyond the point where you call for help in the centre and there are no resources available in the centre to send.

So having it where municipalities aren't just dependent on others, where, of course, you can send help – but then at least they do have some built-in resilience and some understanding of handling things themselves. I think that's important for those who don't have it. I mean, I'm not going to paint everybody with the brush. Some municipalities have excellent emergency management plans in place, other ones maybe could use a bit of updating, and other ones maybe could use a bit of prodding. So I think that's good.

Other parts that I think are important beyond making sure these plans are updated: ensuring that elected officials and municipal employees understand their emergency management roles and responsibilities and are indeed trained for these roles. I can see that as being a very insightful recommendation to make and for a host of reasons, but one in particular – and this comes from my own direct experience – is that you'll find your elected officials facing a lot of public pressure to do certain things. They might be asking you to open up another emergency relief centre. They might be asking you to facilitate sending supplies here. They might be telling you to second-guess the actions of your trained emergency first responders. There are all types of temptations, especially when you're under stress yourself and you're not quite sure of what your own role is, to potentially get in the way and act in ways that maybe you shouldn't. Totally understandable and totally from the best of intentions, but if you're not clear on what your roles and responsibilities are, it can be easy under stress to overstep those. So I think that's another thing I'd like to highlight for that bill, to make

all of our hard-working municipal officials' and elected officials' jobs a bit easier that way.

The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills brought up concerns over the resources available to smaller municipalities in order to meet these new obligations, and I think that's a valid question to raise. I know that when you talk to them, any time there are big changes in government regulation, the first question that they ask is: how are we going to find the time and the money and the resources to implement this? Now, there are free resources that are already available for the small municipalities if they so choose to be able to access. I would encourage other members, if their municipalities have those concerns, to let them know about it. The Emergency Management Agency offers several free programs and tools to help these communities fulfill their responsibilities.

These include a field officer program, which supports municipal emergency management through field officer visits, feedback on emergency management materials upon request, and delivery of training – this is all free of charge, by the way – and a suite of free online and in-class emergency management training courses. They have a good place to start. They offer the community emergency management program, an online application that provides templates and guidance to develop emergency management plans and programs. Now, is there more that perhaps needs to be done? Well, I guess as this rolls out, you know, we'll be getting that feedback, but definitely there are substantial resources already in place, and that is a credit to the management agency that they're there.

I guess that's all I have to say about this bill at the present time. I look forward to further debate and Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate in second reading.

Mr. S. Anderson: I'm good.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 8

Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

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

Mr. Stier: Good morning and thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everybody. As the critic for Municipal Affairs I've taken it upon myself to look into some of the information that we've received this morning. Conversations that have been held this morning included a brief conversation with the minister, which I appreciate very much. I don't have a lot to go into here this morning, but when we last visited this bill in the spring, there were a lot of different things that were basically unknown to us, and there were a lot of conversations that were held over the past several years during my time in the House where we had a lot of incidents in the province, whether it's been the Slave Lake fire, the incidents in Calgary and High River with flooding, the Fort McMurray fire, of course, as has been mentioned this morning, I imagine, and some other things.

There were concerns from the public and most recently, by the way, in my own area in Pincher Creek with the Kenow fire on how these responses were handled by both local EMS personnel, fire response people, et cetera, et cetera, and I would like to stop at that point and just say that I'm so happy to see some of the great, great efforts by all of these different services in every municipality and in every agency. They've just been phenomenal given the circumstances that they've had.

At the same time, though, having said that, within the different reports that have been produced since some of those events took place, a lot of situations were reported upon where improvement could have been sought. From my memory, because I haven't read them all over this morning in much detail, the Flat Top Complex report after Slave Lake and some others talked about Alberta Emergency Management and the agencies involved and how they worked together and how municipalities worked together and how the various fire response teams were able to, especially in one particular note, communicate effectively and have a good chain of command and have a good authority in terms of who was doing what where, et cetera, et cetera.

11:00

The government had originally set out in the annual report and the business plan in 2018 a number of objectives, and I believe that the response to these objectives was Bill 8. I would like to say that I'm glad to see a lot of the work that has been done, but because of the way we work in this government between opposition and the government, a lot of times we on the other side here are not informed of day-to-day events and/or consultations or meetings or what's been going on, especially throughout the summer here with the consultation that was done on Bill 8.

I just wanted to take a moment to quickly outline some of the strategies that were in the business plan and then move on to some questions if I could, Madam Chair. The first one was:

- 3.1 Strengthen the provincial emergency management system by modernizing the legislative framework.
- 3.2 Improve Alberta's emergency preparedness and response capability [and that involved also the] Provincial Operations Centre.
- 3.3 Improve community and individual resilience by promoting disaster preparedness . . .
- 3.4 Improve the province's capacity to assist communities' and Albertans' recovery from disasters . . .
- 3.5 Improve resilience within the Government of Alberta by strengthening the Government of Alberta's business continuity program.

And lastly,

- 3.6 Ensure provincial 911 and emergency public alerting programs are in place and are able to meet future technological challenges.

That was more or less what I assumed was something that initiated Bill 8 as well as the other events that have taken place. I'm happy to say that the government provided us with a little briefing document on the different things that they were going to endeavour to do, and I'm quite supportive of those as well.

However, since that time there was a lot of consultation over the summer, then, to summarize. We don't know what information was gleaned from that. We don't know what concerns, other than what we're hearing from municipal organizations, were raised. So I wonder if the minister could address that. I'll give him the opportunity to provide the House with information with regard to these consultations.

Secondly, were there changes from the initial thought processes that Bill 8 created to redirect some of those initial thoughts that were in Bill 8 to the current form that it is now? Lastly, the document

received during that briefing included a lot of talk about upcoming regulations. As always, we do not participate in regulations here in the House, so it would be nice if they would shed some light on the regulations that are anticipated as well in that regard.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Further questions, comments? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Left it pretty open there, so I'll try to address some of the things that the hon. member was talking about. As he mentioned, we did do a lot of consultation from the spring through the summer up until now with particular municipal organizations, emergency management professionals, First Nations, first responders, and law enforcement in particular out there to understand what we learned from our postincident assessment reports. He is quite right that the postincident assessment reports from every disaster, which we do, informed us on what was going on here and what we needed to do as well as the consultation with these other agencies and organizations.

One of the things that we had talked about was, for example, the incident command system, so formalizing and codifying some of the information that we have out there, the jargon, the way that we speak to each other, our communications systems. With the fires down south at Kenow, what we saw, you know, was that the people on the ground worked really well together, again, with what they had and what they knew, but we knew that we needed to do better. You saw last year when there were fires down there that they worked fantastically together, and it had much to do with the firefighters down there, the first responders, the municipalities, our field officers. Everybody was on the same page. That's what a lot of Bill 8 is doing. It's trying to codify and formalize those communications and understand them.

The incident command system is one of those things where it's not technology or hardware; it's about, like I said, clear processes and reporting lines and the same type of common language and structure. One of the things, that my director of emergency management says, is the speed of trust so that you know that the person beside you has been trained and knows exactly what they need to do. So you have no worries, and you can do things faster and quicker and more efficiently because we're all there in emergency management to help people on the ground. So that's part of what's going on there.

We also have First Nations field officers out there that we've been working with as well to help when it crosses over into First Nations areas.

What else can I talk about? Regional collaboration. There was talk about some of the smaller municipalities' capacity. We went out over the last year to municipalities all across the province and said: "Okay. What is your capacity? Let us know what your issues are, your concerns, what your resources are." We put money into mitigation, prevention across the province to aid these places.

Now, when Bill 8 gets instituted, or if it does, if the House so chooses, what that will do is make sure that every municipality has an emergency plan in place. If it is a smaller municipality that doesn't have a huge capacity, Municipal Affairs and AEMA in particular have a lot of training courses, a lot of capability to help those municipalities. If there are two small municipalities, for example, that have volunteer firefighters, which is normally what they do, we encourage them to work together because we all know that disasters aren't going to look at the boundaries; they're just going to go right across. So we need them to work together, and we'll be there to help support them as well, like I say, with the capacity and the resources that we have.

What else? I'm trying to think of what you were asking there, Member.

Mr. Stier: Regulations.

Mr. S. Anderson: Regulations. They're in the bill already. Like, we've done all the work on the consultation on the regulations. That's why we took the time from the spring to now. If there's any regulation in particular that you want me to speak about, I'll get that for you. I'll get my staff to get me the information on it. We do have it laid out in the bill. Hopefully, you guys have that – that would be great – but if there are some particulars you need, I can get that for you. There's a lot to go through with that, so I don't want to just speak off the cuff about something that you guys need to know about.

Like I said, we were informed by a lot of consultation on this, so I'd be happy to try to answer whatever question you have, and if I can't, then I will most definitely get the information for you.

The Chair: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you. I'd like to respond to the minister's remarks. I appreciate the minister's honesty and openness today. As always, it's very helpful in these discussions. With respect to the minister's remarks just a moment ago with respect to regulations, as he knows and most people here know, we don't get into the meat of the matter in regulations. So I gather that you're not aware of or have not yet had any particular focus on – I see you're waving a paper. Maybe you do have something. You know, usually with any bill we never see the regulations. Then later on cabinet and ministries work on those, and suddenly, wham, we're getting contacts from constituents or municipalities on certain aspects of regulations that came as a surprise to us.

Nonetheless, I'd like to drill down a little bit on what you've said with regard to regional collaboration and the municipal capacities. All warranted ideas; great, great thoughts there. Getting down to the Kenow fire as one example, in the Pincher Creek area there was a considerable number of landowner concerns and organized landowners who, as a result of the lack of co-ordination down there between several entities, had a fairly difficult challenge when suddenly within just 30 minutes they had to evacuate whereas, as the minister may know, at the meeting before that, the night before – in other words, 13 hours before – everything was all good and fine.

So I just wondered if the minister would like to speak a little bit more. Parks Canada was there, the local municipality rural, local municipality urban, and there was also the RCMP – I'm just trying to think; I'm missing one, but I'll come to it in a moment – and, of course, the local fire services from the municipality. Other municipalities came in to assist, of course, and we were thankful so much for all of these other municipalities donating men and equipment on this horrible event.

Nonetheless, is the minister aware of significant improvements in terms of interagency co-operation and chain of command – that is the biggest, biggest concern that was raised – and also the changes in evacuation? I realize that there are things about rights and so on and so forth with people and how they might be compensated later if there are evacuation issues. Chain of command is important to us. What has been changing there? And what about these evacuations? Are there improvements in procedures there?

Thank you.

11:10

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Thank you to the member. Yeah. Like I just said a minute ago, when you look at Kenow the year before and then what happened last year, you can see the improvements, and part of that had to do with an assessment after, in reports that came out. We had field officers on the ground at the time, so we went down there to speak to the municipalities. That was a bit of a different situation with Kenow. It's interesting because you had municipalities, provincial parks, national parks, and then First Nations, so it was quite a complicated situation that we had to deal with.

When I was talking before about regional collaboration, one of the regulations talks about state and local authorities who have mutual aid agreements and who choose to enter into these regional collaboration agreements. They can stipulate which EMA, Emergency Management Act, powers and duties are delegated to those organizations. We're trying to leave a little bit of local autonomy in that sense because they are the people on the ground there that know it better than anybody else. Part of that will be informed by the joint emergency advisory committees that are being supported through the bylaws from the participating partners. That will be part of that part, where they can ascertain, in a sense, what works best for them on the ground down there.

We did learn from Kenow to last year about the procedures and about the incident command portion with communication. That was definitely a big deal. With every disaster communication is the number one thing that comes out of it that says: we need to do that better. The people on the ground did that last time. We're very happy about that.

The other part is where we're instituting the municipal elected official training requirement so that every municipal official, even if they're not directly involved as emergency management, as a director of emergency management, which in most small communities would be the CAO because they stay around a lot longer, for example, than elected officials or a fire chief, you know, that's a volunteer – there will be requirements for municipal officials to take an online course to understand their roles and responsibilities. Most of the time it's, you know, to try to make sure that they have the right answers for the citizens because they need to get out of there, too. They kind of all need to get out and let the emergency professionals do the job. That's another part. We're making sure that they have the communication for their members out there and across agencies.

Also, the director of emergency management, there's training required for them which is more extensive, obviously, than for the municipal officials. There will be provisions that will require identified training that they can do within an 18-month period. There will also be municipal employee training requirements. There are all these online courses that are available to them, too, outside of kind of what we're requiring of them.

That's a lot. I mean, with some of the stuff that we're doing there there's a lot involved, but we're there. We have the capacity at AEMA to help with that, so that's part of what we're doing there. I hope that helps a little bit for you.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a follow-up to that, and this is going to be my last series of clarification questions. Thank you, Minister.

Going back to regional collaboration, this seems to be where it frequently is occurring that we have these communication issues and so on and so forth. In the briefing document we received I noted under regional collaboration some of the regulations that were

possibly intended to come up. I'll read what I've got here. One of them was:

The regulation will allow municipalities who enter into a regional collaboration agreement to stipulate which emergency management agreement powers and duties are being delegated.

There may be a requirement that an establishment of a joint emergency advisory committee must be supported by bylaws.

In some of the types of things that we've seen in Municipal Affairs before where we've got regional collaboration in regard to, perhaps, planning and other things, we've said that they have to do ICFs, intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. They have to do MDPs. They have to do this, and there's a timeline. With regard to these regulations to allow municipalities to enter into regional collaboration agreements regarding emergency management, is the government, instead of allowing it, going to make it mandatory for them to do these regional frameworks for emergency management or not?

I think it may be something to consider. I'm wondering if that is part of your regulation conversations and part of your intention, to make it mandatory to do that because it seems that when life is in jeopardy, there may be something more important here in many respects as compared to intermunicipal collaboration frameworks and planning. This is an emergency situation. Why wouldn't you, if not, make it mandatory for these to be done?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Yeah, I think it's a good question, and I appreciate that. As it stands right now, it isn't mandatory, and that was informed from our postincident assessments but also from the municipalities themselves, speaking to RMA and AUMA and the two big cities about that. The bigger municipalities have the capacity to do a lot of these things. Some of these small ones might not, so we try to take that into consideration. Do we think they should do it? Yes. But we are trying to leave as much local autonomy in that respect as we can. That's why we will come in with our field officers to help in that respect.

So, yeah, it isn't mandatory right now. That is informed from municipalities, specifically, on that and directly relating to capacity, basically. But the residents that we're elected by, you know, expect us to do these things, so we will make sure that mandatory emergency plans and exercises and all those things are created, but some of these other things like that one you speak of aren't mandatory.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's really a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. It's important to review legislation on a regular basis to ensure there is alignment between legislation and changing situations. It's particularly important to review the Emergency Management Act regularly because of changes: changes like evolving technology to save lives, changes in how municipalities are managed, and changes like the increasing frequency of natural disasters due to anthropogenic climate change. All of these dynamic factors require the Emergency Management Act to be reviewed and refreshed regularly.

Before being elected to the Legislature, I worked as a business analyst, and one of the certifications I earned was business continuity consultant. As a business continuity consultant I worked with companies to help them understand how their businesses could withstand a disaster. I helped them understand what steps they needed to take to make sure their business could survive an outage

caused by circumstances beyond their control, and what I learned from this training is that it's imperative to have a plan. If you aren't prepared for unpredictable or unexpected circumstances, your likelihood to survive is low, and you can vastly improve your outcomes by being prepared, by putting plans, strategies, and training in place to keep your business going and reviewing these plans on a regular basis to ensure their usefulness.

The Emergency Management Act speaks to these same concepts. How do we ensure that our cities and our towns and our rural municipalities are able to withstand the devastating effects of a disaster, whether it's natural or man-made? By doing so, we take a closer look at the existing legislation, and we can ensure what's on the books meets the needs we have today.

From the fires in Slave Lake in 2011 to the Calgary floods of 2013 and the fires in Fort McMurray in 2016 our province and our emergency management personnel have acquired more and more information. While it's very unfortunate that our province has had so many disasters so close together and that we continue to be affected by disasters in the surrounding area like this past summer's fires in B.C., that obliterated the sun from view for weeks, and that so many people's lives have been turned upside down, the information gathered has been invaluable. We see those lessons incorporated into emergency management exercises that are held on a regular basis to ensure that first responders are prepared for the unexpected on a large scale.

By definition, disasters affect many people and have the potential for loss of life. I'd like to take an opportunity to thank all of the first responders who help us stay safe during a disaster and every day any of us find ourselves in unfortunate circumstances. Thank you to the police, the fire and the EMS personnel that are there for us every day.

11:20

It's smart to have a plan and be prepared so that lives and property can hopefully be saved, and it's important to ensure that plans and processes make sense on a regular basis. For these reasons the Alberta Party caucus supports the passage of Bill 8.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. My background in my previous life was in this world, emergency services, and I just want to say to the minister that I commend him, with a caveat, of course. Don't get cocky. This seems to be a reasonable bill. It seems to be a bill that is about addressing issues within our emergency services. It is truly about reinforcing best practices, and I hope that.

That said, when I read the document, though, it does appear to be very, very high level. I hope as they craft the rest of it and get into the nuances of it, they provide more in the way of explanations as well as even scenarios to demonstrate so that the individual people in the municipalities across our province understand how these things evolved and why we do them. It is about leadership. It is about accountability. We have 87 fiefdoms here within this Legislature, and within each one of our constituencies it's divided up even more so into different little regional communities and towns and whatnot, each one with their own little – I hate to use the word – empire, but certainly everyone is responsible for their own community.

We just want to make sure that there's a balance there, ensuring that they do have the supports and the education, as the minister has indicated. Some issues that have happened previously were where groups have come in and overtaken the local group. Without using that local expertise to identify some of the issues, there are balls that get dropped. Again, it is a balance. It is about making sure that there

are things like mutual aid agreements. It's good to see that that's being led from the top because, quite honestly, a lot of municipalities need to be guided towards that. Positions are replaced in these municipalities, and the new guy doesn't know what's going on. That's where I see this legislation really leading to, really enforcing a lot of these communities to participate in things like mutual aid, to be aware of all the hazards in their area as well as have the ability to access the resources to that.

It boils down to money. A lot of these issues that you see come out of these incidents is that sometimes it's as simple as someone being hesitant to call for something because it costs money, and they're hoping another agency will call for that. As an example, hazardous materials are very expensive for some of these big events. You know, I've been at events where it's costing \$30,000 a day for a group to come from Calgary and bring their equipment to address a spill or something like that. Those are literally the things that will impede a community from actually calling for that, because they don't have the money. I know that emergency management has a budget. I think those are also things they need to clarify and support those communities with, making sure that they have the financial supports to call for the resources they need, provided they also have the education and the understanding to know when to call for those things.

Certainly, I might be getting into the weeds a little bit. My co-workers here are keeping it at the high level. Again, that is what I would desire, making sure that even though you have this high-level document, you provide some more information and more clarity regarding some of the smaller issues that occur. I have no doubt that you can come up with a lot of examples that would definitely reinforce those decisions.

That said, here in Alberta, here in Canada we also should be proud of the fact that we do have safety ingrained into our society. As I might point out, just this summer in I think it was Portugal or Spain – Portugal had some fires. People died in those fires. We're talking western Europe here, where they're just as modern and advanced as we are, and they lost people.

In Fort McMurray we had, depending on what number you're looking at, about a hundred thousand people evacuating out of a lot of these camps and all that. We didn't lose one person. Albeit we did lose two kids in a semirelated motor vehicle accident farther down the road, but directly as a result of the evacuation we didn't lose anyone. That's really amazing because we had a lot of people. A lot of houses burned down. I'm surprised that not one person who had his ear plugs in and his light blinders on so that he could sleep and work his next shift died. We didn't lose one of those people, and there are a lot of those guys in that community.

Again, commendations to the minister. You will need to provide us with more clarity, especially for a lot of the municipalities so that they can be more supportive. But the intent seems to be very good, and I just wanted to be on the record with that.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah, I'll try to address it a little bit. You know, the hon. member, I appreciate his background as well and what he's done in the past. I have a lot of respect for all first responders. He mentioned western Europe. Actually, some of the folks over there phoned, got a hold of Alberta to see what we've done in the past because with what's unfortunately happened to us here, we are fortunately very good at what we do. We lead in Canada and, quite frankly, around the world. People look to us as leaders on this.

You know, when he talks about some of the things that we're doing out there, a lot of what he's talking about isn't in this bill. It's already in AEMA. It sets out, say, DRP, for example, after the fact who pays for what, and there's certain criteria. That's already stuff that we've got laid out. Bill 8 is more along the lines of formalizing, codifying some of the things we've already been doing and also putting into action the requirements or the things that have come out of our assessment reports afterward. So a lot of these things that he was talking about are already happening.

But, you know, some of the work we have done in respect to, say, big incidents or all hazards is we've got Canada Joint Task Force 2 down in Calgary that goes across the province. This isn't part of the bill, but it will speak to a bit of kind of if there is a massive disaster, we do have some money that we gave out to six communities. It's \$2.6 million in grants to co-ordinate regional all-hazards incident management teams to strengthen regional emergency response. That's part of Canada Joint Task Force 2: the town of High Level, the city of Cold Lake, the capital region, Red Deer, and the city of Medicine Hat. So that's spread out across the province to help when there are massive incidents that maybe the local volunteer people, in particular, might not be able to handle.

So we've already done some of that work in that respect – a lot of work, actually – but I understand where the member is coming from. We already have things in place to make clear who pays for what. A lot of this is clarifying, you know, our roles and responsibilities in particular, not those other things already set in place, but I appreciate what he's saying. It is something that through our consultation we heard and that we're all aware of.

Since I became minister, I think that one of the things that is really impressive about emergency management personnel is that, you know, you might go to some other conventions and things like that where businesses or whoever it is might hold cards close to their chest; emergency management professionals don't. They're very open about: if there's a mistake, then how do we get better? Every single person in there is trying to do the best for the people that we represent. It's saving lives and protecting property and livestock out there. It's quite an interesting world to be part of, and I'm quite proud of the people we have in AEMA and across this province that do such phenomenal work.

Again, thank you to the member for the work that he's done in the past and to everybody involved.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise and speak today in favour of Bill 8. I really do appreciate the changes that were made in this bill. I believe that it will go a long way in making our communities safer and making Alberta substantially better.

As has been talked about many times in the House today, the community that I grew up in, Fort McMurray, sustained an absolutely devastating fire just over two years ago with over 2,500 homes burnt, and everyone in our region experienced challenge. Everyone was out for a month, except there were a few people that did choose to stay, so having that clarification on the evacuation is very important because it puts a lot more onus on the individual to maintain.

But one fact that I do want to put into everyone's mind right now as to part of why this is so important is that as of October 5, 2018, there are only 797 homeowners that have received their final building permit and are allowed to live in those homes. That's 30 per cent. Let that sink in for a moment. Only 30 per cent of the 2,500 homes that burnt down have been rebuilt and are being occupied. That's a staggering number.

11:30

So it's very important that we do what we can to make sure that this bill passes and that we take emergency management seriously because anyone's community is simply one fire or flood away from this. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Further questions, comments, or amendments? Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I do have a couple of questions I'd like to just briefly raise. First of all, I'd like to ask the minister if he could just help me to understand and clarify. We've asked for intermunicipal agreements, and I totally support them. I'm wondering about the issue of interdepartmental or interagency agreements, particularly with regard to – maybe this is more relevant to smaller communities than really large situations – the issue of social services in the midst of an emergency disaster. I don't believe that there is a proper framework or a funding formula to engage social service agencies for emergency disasters.

Quite frankly, managing disasters is often about: how do we care for the people that are displaced? They get into emergency shelters, they have to have temporary housing, yet I don't believe – I say this because several years ago, when I was involved with some of the emergency management things, it's an issue that came up with some municipalities and a couple of field individuals as well. There's no mechanism by which local emergency management groups can call for social service assistance to care for these people. I'm just wondering if that's been addressed. If you could make a few comments on that one for me, please.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Thank you to the member. He's quite right. With a lot of volunteers and volunteer organizations – you know, social services are something the AEMA has already been working on and does continuously to adapt. Red Cross is the big one, but you've got food banks and other volunteers that are involved. That would be part of the local emergency operation centre. It does work through that. AEMA has done lots of work over the past couple of years, trying to work with local organizations as much as we can – you're right – so that we can have those services in place. It usually does come down to the community itself. But we definitely have done some work on that, and there's more to do. I was talking to food banks this morning about that. It's something that I think is important for us, all types of social services.

Good point. Thank you, member.

The Chair: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Yes. Thank you and thank you for the answer. I just think that there might be some room also for some sort of formal process by which some of the government social services might be involved. I don't think that social services has an emergency management plan within their mandate and neither does emergency management to engage them, so some sort of possible engagement, although I truly give credit to the many, many volunteer organizations that in many cases do step up. I only raise it because a couple of municipalities have raised it with me. Anyway, I'll leave it at that.

Secondly, with regard to evacuation orders, could you clarify for me? In light of the new regulations I don't know what the consequences will be for individuals who adamantly refuse to leave. That's the first part of the question. The second part of the question is: if they are required to leave and their property becomes destroyed, they're forbidden the opportunity to try to stay and

protect their property – in some cases they are actually very successful at that – then does that automatically mean that they will be qualified for compensation if they lose property due to the natural disaster rather than just due to emergency management activities? Those two questions with regard to evacuation, please.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Yeah. I mean, it was in place already that the fine for contravention of the act could be, I believe, \$10,000. That was part of what this act was trying to address. The liability for the first responders is what we talked about earlier. We've had RMA, in particular, ask me about livestock. If somebody needs to stay for their animals, they need to let the local emergency operation centre know that that's happening. We do understand that this has happened in the past. I think that as long as this communication is open, that's what we need to do, because it isn't forbidden for them to stay.

Part of the act is to make sure that that clarity is there. They aren't forbidden, but the problem was the liability issues that were there before for first responders. Now we've said no, like, it's up to the individual, who's accountable for themselves. So if they're going to stay, then, you know, the first responder isn't liable for that. They have to do a job of saving other people as well, right? That was part of that. They aren't forbidden because we do know there are cases, in particular with livestock, where people want to stay and take care of them. So we tried to allow for those types of things in the act, to make sure, because we heard it loud and clear from people out there.

Mr. Orr: I will be very brief. Just to say thank you, that's a very good clarification, that's what I needed to hear, and I think you've got it right.

The Chair: Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to rise to support Bill 8, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, and I would like to commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs for putting this bill forward. This bill certainly will have a huge impact in my constituency of Calgary-Bow.

When I go door-knocking, this is the number one thing I hear at the doors. People are still very much impacted by the 2013 floods; Bowness was quite devastated by that. You know, one of the things that I love about Bowness is that they're a tight-knit community, and they help their neighbours. Since the 2013 flood there really is a sense of solidarity in the community. I think it really has strengthened that community a lot. Actually, I was just at the Bowness Community Association AGM, and this was brought up. People are still talking about it. I know that this bill will actually improve the lives of Bownesians, as they like to call themselves, and the residents of Calgary-Bow.

I also wanted to commend the minister on his consultation that he did for this bill. Back in June, actually, I was asked to announce on behalf of the minister that our government will be providing the city of Calgary \$1 million for emergency preparedness. I went out to High River for that announcement, and I was welcomed by many different firefighters and emergency-preparedness associations, and they were talking about different ways that we can prevent flood or emergencies. The funding is going to be used for things like the flood dams, water tubes, portable dams. These are things that could really help communities when they're scrambling to find ways to help with the emergency.

You know, after I made that announcement, people were really excited about that because, like I said, the number one thing I hear is: "What are we going to do about emergency preparedness? What

if there's another flood?" People actually watch the levels of the river rise and fall. When it starts to rise, they do start to call my office and ask: "What are we doing on flood, emergency preparedness? I don't want to go through what I went through in 2013." Our city needs to be prepared. It's such a pleasure to say that this is a priority for our government and we're going to continue to make it a priority.

Thank you very much to the minister for putting this bill forward and making sure that this will be on the agenda for this session. It doesn't just impact my constituency; it also impacts everyone else across Alberta as we saw with Fort McMurray and the wildfires, the fires in Slave Lake. We have gone through a lot in this province, but Albertans are strong and resilient, and we're always going to be ready to take on whatever comes at us.

Thank you very much again, and I hope everyone supports this bill.

11:40

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As I look at this bill, I think about how important an issue this is, of course, dealing with, you know, the emergency management of the province. I think often of the people that have lost homes in things like fires and floods and that sort of thing, and I can't imagine what that would be like, I really can't. I've never had that experience in my lifetime of losing a home, and I can't imagine what people go through when they have that happen, not to mention what happens when you lose a whole community. Situations like Fort Mac, where so many homes were burned and so many communities were lost right there in that one city. Obviously, it's a very important issue and it's something that needs to be done, and of course it needs to be done right because the results of getting it wrong are so devastating for the people that it affects.

I just had a couple of questions here and a few comments, too. I know after the Fort Mac fire and, actually, after each one of these disasters that we've had in Alberta recently, there have always been reviews, there have always been investigations and things like that. I just wanted to find out from the minister, in particular with the Fort Mac fire: are all the reviews, internal or otherwise, and all the investigations and all the different things that are being looked at as far as the cause of the fire, the reaction to the fire from government and from the different, you know, responders; I just want to know if those have all been finished. All those investigations, all the reviews, again, internal or otherwise: if they're all finished, and if the government has that information at this time.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Out of the Fort Mac one, the May 2016 Wood Buffalo Wildfire Post-incident Assessment Report in particular, I believe that it was 21 recommendations, I think, came out of that. They are either all implemented or in the final stages of implementation. I shouldn't say final, because the Provincial Operations Centre is a big one, and that's something that I'm in the plans for right now. But there were 21, and they are either implemented or in the stages of being implemented, for sure. Some of them are similar things that came out of other postincident reports, too; in particular communication, which is one that I always bring up.

But there are a couple of them I can actually bring up for you if you want. For example, one was a review of this emergency management framework, that obviously we've done. The other one, recommendation 9, was:

Develop a Provincial Emergency Evacuation Framework and . . . model to provide enhanced decision-making capabilities at the Provincial level.

10. Build depth and capacity within local authorities to enable communities to support [themselves] during emergencies, which is something we've been doing a lot of the last year.

Another one about mandating incident command adoption, so that's another one that we've been doing. Those are just some examples for you, but out of the 21, they are either done or in the process.

Thank you.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. Thanks. I appreciate the minister's response there, of course, on the review and recommendations from that report. I just want to confirm with him that of all the reviews, internal or otherwise, being done in this regard: was it just the one that was done, that produced the 21 recommendations, or are there more that have been done or are in the process of being done?

Mr. S. Anderson: The KPMG report was the one that came to Municipal Affairs, and that report is done. And, like I said, implementation is ongoing on a few of those, but they are either done or in the process of being implemented. So that's where we're at there.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. I guess as we look at this bill, I know we've expressed concerns with maybe smaller communities, smaller municipal governments and their capacity to deal with some of these new regulations and what's contained in this bill. You know, I trust the minister at his word, that he's willing to work together with these small communities and that the government will help where needed and maybe have some of these communities work together, and I appreciate that. I think it is definitely a concern of ours and a concern of Albertans that these smaller communities aren't stretched too thin as far as, you know, working on something as important as protecting their communities from emergencies and disasters and things like that.

Again, it's so important to get this right, and I guess I hope at this time, too, that the government is willing to kind of take advice as it comes up and as things progress. We always learn more as time goes on, and we always have better ideas, and other ideas will come forward as we progress. Hopefully, we can implement some of these other ideas that people may have on how to prevent these disasters in our communities.

Again, we understand that the government took the time this summer to do consultations on this, and I hope that that consultation, you know, that feedback that they got is well represented here. It'd be a shame to have taken that time to talk with the communities affected and not implement what they've been talking about or what their concerns are.

I think there are some great things in this bill. I think it's, again, a very important bill. It's good to have increased consistency and effectiveness in the local authorities emergency advisory committees. I think it's good that it raises the effectiveness of local authorities emergency management agencies. It's good to ensure that the municipal elected officials are trained and prepared and knowledgeable of their assigned roles in an emergency. There are lots of good things there that I think can only help our communities as disasters come or potentially come and how we react to them.

Just, I guess, a couple of thoughts here. Will this take care of the timely and relevant communication with those affected by emergencies and disasters? I think in some of these disasters, of

course, we've found that lack of proper communication and different groups being able to communicate properly with each other has created more problems and actually made things worse. I'm just curious. Minister, do you have the confidence that this bill will solve that problem of timely and relevant communication with those affected by the emergency or disaster?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Member. You're right. Communication is key out there. I have all the confidence in the world that this will help communicate to residents. I mean, this is just part of a bigger picture. We have a lot of things that we do already, whether it be the emergency management app that we have, which was a leader in the country, the field officers on the ground who are out there, the municipal officials, emergency management professionals that are out there, first responders. That's why we're trying to codify what we've been doing, the really good work that's out there right now, but also the incident command system to make sure that's smooth across borders so that, as I said before, we have that speed of trust to make sure that we're taking care of the residents and the people and the livestock and property as best we can and they're as prepared as best we can.

You know, for the future we will have to adapt, as technologies evolve, our different communications systems out there, for sure. It is part of a bigger picture that we do fairly well right now, but, you know, we just need to make sure that we listen and improve as we go. I'm proud and I'm confident that we can continue to get the job done and lead this country in emergency management.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. I just wanted to clarify one thing. I'm not sure that this bill clarifies exactly who is ultimately in charge during an emergency response. I just wanted to see if you could kind of clarify that as far as, you know, where this bill covers that issue as far as who is ultimately in charge.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. It depends on the capacity of the municipalities in that respect when they declare states of local emergency. The municipality declares those. In particular, when they don't have the capacity – Fort McMurray, I mean, is the massive example – when they call us in, we have field officers in place with the municipalities to understand the situation as a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour kind of deal. As soon as we know that the capacity isn't there for those local municipalities, that's when AEMA takes over at the request of the local municipalities. We don't just come in and take over. It is always the local authorities that we're in communication with to make sure. There's some clarity in the bill; there's some clarity on those things. It's a local clarification in that respect.

11:50

Yeah, for sure, it's because we have people on the ground that need to make sure we listen to the municipalities. Yeah, I appreciate that. It is something that came up in a couple of different jurisdictions, and we've made sure to try to keep that as clear as possible. Kenow, you know, and what happened last year: the changes there, that's because of that kind of stuff.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: One more question, if I could. Thanks for the answers. I appreciate it. I'm sure many municipalities already have current practices and policies that meet the new requirements. I'm just wondering how many municipalities have work to do yet on

getting their current practices and policies up to snuff as far as Bill 8 is concerned.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Well, I don't have that number, you know, in that respect, but that was part of the work that I referenced earlier in this last year, going out and ascertaining the capacity and the resources that the municipalities have and the Métis and talking to some of the First Nations with our Minister of Indigenous Relations as well, across ministry in that respect with Energy and some of these other ones, too, to understand what business has out there and industry. The capacity out there: a lot of them are pretty good. They know what they need. They're already ready to go. There were just some smaller ones maybe that didn't have quite the capacity, and that was part of what we tried to remedy over the spring and into the summer. Now we'll work with them on these to engage with them to see if they need help in training and with emergency management courses and those types of things. I don't have the number. We didn't look at that. We're there to help them, and we will continue to do so.

Thanks, Member.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments?

Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to rise again to speak to this bill and thank the minister for his initiative in this. I also appreciate the comments of some of my esteemed colleagues in terms of those that are experts in emergency management. Some would call me disaster prone, having lived through a few things like sinking ships in tsunamis, so I understand the planning of emergency management. I like to think of myself as a reasonable emergency management expert, having survived a few of those things, but it's very gratifying to see that this bill actually addresses some of the key issues in terms of addressing the preparedness and ensuring that our communities not only are ready for possible disasters – of course, it's kind of like an insurance policy. You hope you never have to use the training, but, in fact, these are the insurance policies we make by ensuring that the province and cities and municipalities are ready in the event that something occurs. We don't have a lot of time. You don't have a lot of time to go backwards to do that training in a hurry. You have to be able to react and do much of that through having a plan and executing it.

I was in the airline business for about 20 years; gratefully, we had emergency and accident training and situational analysis and all sorts of preparedness for that. Gratefully, I never had to use that in 20 years, but we had it annually to ensure that we were ready in the event that there was a disaster, not just to be ready for a disaster but to also deal with the people and to ensure that the emotions and some of the challenges people face beyond the physical impact of that is also ready and there to be addressed.

My question to the minister. I've had some opportunity recently through the Economic Developers Association of Alberta to understand a lot of the work that they're doing in terms of resiliency training, which is really not just during the disasters and the emergencies but afterwards, to ensure that these municipalities and organizations, including the chambers of commerce and the municipal leaders and the political leaders of the area, are ready to move quickly after and to understand what needs to be done during an emergency to ensure that they're ready and that their capacity is not undermined.

I know that the Economic Developers Association of Alberta and their CEO, Leann Hackman-Carty, have been going around the province and have been supported in some respects by the

government to do some of this resiliency training, and I think that they're moving slowly but surely through many municipalities. They're struggling with funding, from what I understand, in terms of doing that resiliency training. So I guess my question to the minister is: in this bill we're talking about preparedness and how we act when an emergency comes, but are you working with your colleagues in terms of that resiliency training to ensure not only that we address the incidents but that we address the impact and are able to move forward quickly afterwards to ensure – we've heard from our esteemed Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin as well about the fact that there's only about 30 per cent of the households that have actually gotten through the process of some of the funding, the closure . . .

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Committee of the Whole will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 8.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing as we've made good progress this morning, I would move that we rise until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]

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