



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 27, 2018

Day 54

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the consul general of Japan in Calgary, Mr. Shigenobu Kobayashi, and his spouse, Keiko Kobayashi, as well as the deputy consul general, Mr. Yasuhiko Tanaka, and the honorary consul general in Edmonton, Olenka Bilash, and staff from the consulate general. Alberta and Japan have enjoyed a very strong and productive relationship for decades, and there's tremendous potential to strengthen that relationship even further, especially under the TPP agreement. We look forward to continuing our work with the consul general to further our trade relations and our connections with such an important partner, friend, and ally. Alberta remains committed to our partnership with our sister province, which is Hokkaido, and looks forward to celebrating the 40th anniversary of the agreement in 2020. I now ask all of our guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à cette Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire the students from Leo Nickerson elementary school. The students are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Stephanie Desjarlais and Mme Roxanne Walter, their chaperones Ms Holly Cosgrove and – I apologize if I don't get your name right – Ms Awa Ndoe. I would ask all of the students, chaperones, and teachers to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 17 students from the school of Legal. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Jason Paik and Caroline Corbett along with parent chaperone Greg Bauwens. I would ask that they please rise at this time and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you teachers, chaperones, and students from Maskwacis Cultural College, in my constituency. They are social workers, and they're in a political policy class so, no doubt, here to advocate also for a new college facility. If they would rise when I call their names, please: Joyce Crandall, Wilda

Listener, Ally Bull, Geraldine Rain, Darryl Montour, Kaylene Buffalo, Mekwun Moses, Sherelle Johnson, Anissa Omeasoo, Tannis Swampy, Shaunita Potts, Lyvia Bruno, Barb Docleen, and Paige Hamelin. If everybody would please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today? The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and introduce a school group to you at this point in time. They won't be joining us until 2 p.m., but of course we'll be in the middle of Routine, so on their behalf, ahead of them arriving here, I rise to introduce to you and through you a school group from St. Jerome Catholic school. There are, I believe, around 30 students with two of their teachers, Alicia Centis and Diane Lacika. I can tell you that St. Jerome is a science-based academy school, and I've had the honour of being a guest judge every year at their science fair. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, when it was part of his riding, was a guest judge for many, many years. Incredibly bright students. The future of our province is in great hands. With that, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming the group from St. Jerome.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Other school groups, hon. members? The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Health I rise to introduce to you and through you some guests who are here today to support the introduction of Bill 30 later this afternoon. These folks have fought long and hard for some of our most vulnerable Albertans to be protected and for more of our mental health services to be regulated. I'm proud that our government is working with them. I want to thank them all for their dedication to making Alberta a better place for those who need help and for their families. If they could please stand and remain standing as I call their names. We have Kim and Mike Argent from Red Deer, and from around our province representatives of the Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Alberta, or FACT-Alberta. We have the chair, Nicole Imgrund, and her husband, Colin Peterson; Laura Hahn, Sean Swaby, Amy Cote, Lorain Gellink, and Nicholas Renaud. These are some of the folks helping us to get mental health and substance use supports right for all Albertans, and I'd like to invite them to please receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Rob Siewert, who is a councillor for the municipal district of Foothills, near High River, where he represents division 1. It's my home riding. I'm very proud that he's here. Rob has been a devoted community member throughout his many years in Foothills as a volunteer in his local school, church, kids' camps, and just being there as needs arise. I've had the pleasure of working with Rob since he was first elected in 2017, and I look forward to continuing to partner with him in the future. Located in the public gallery today, Rob is joined by his wife, Sarah, and their children Leslie, Alysha, Megan, and Ross Siewert. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House some guests: Imran Khan, Sobia Aziz, Ahmer Khan, Anamta Imran, Waseem Hamza, and Nadia Khurshid. All of these guests came all the way from my hometown of Calgary, and they also belong to my hometown of Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir. Imran Khan is a filmmaker, a recent graduate of the Toronto Film School, and he just moved back to Calgary; and Sobia Aziz is an office-bearer with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Azad Kashmir. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, today it is my honour to introduce two senior members from the Wilberforce Project. If they would rise as I call their names: Stephanie Fennelly, the executive director of Wilberforce; and Katie Campbell, the vice-president of communications, Wilberforce. They are a grassroots group of mostly young Albertans working on re-examining laws around abortion services in Alberta. I've been meeting with them today to define areas of common ground on potential parental notification for minors obtaining abortions, improving adoption services, and the importance of repealing the Bill 9 attack on free speech for pro-life Albertans. I ask that all members of the House join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

1:40

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the mayor of Drumheller and her fine husband, Kelly. Mayor Colberg is here today to meet with government members in regard to flood mitigation, which has been an ongoing problem in the city of Drumheller, and I'm pleased to have her rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's indeed an honour and a privilege to be able to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the best and finest representatives of construction companies in Canada. I'd like them to rise as I call their names: Rod Schenk, director of PCL; Mike Martens, director of public affairs, PCA; Paul De Jong, president, PCA; Dennis Perrin, Alberta director of CLAC; Wayne Prins, executive director of CLAC; and Jay Bueckert, regional director of CLAC. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a gentleman from Lacombe, Myles Chykerda. He actually left the sunny city of Los Angeles, where he's a PhD candidate in archaeology, to participate more directly in democracy here in Alberta. He's the Alberta Party candidate for Lacombe-Ponoka. I'd like Myles to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Official Opposition Leader and Pipeline Development

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The UCP leader sat in Ottawa around the cabinet table for 10 years. For two of those years he was the minister responsible for employment, but shockingly he told this Legislature yesterday that "I wasn't responsible for pipelines." Not responsible? Pipelines to new markets mean thousands of jobs for working people in Alberta and across Canada. They mean a better price for our energy resources and billions in revenue for the things that matter to families like schools, hospitals, and roads. As the minister for jobs and the right-hand man to the Prime Minister he was responsible, but he failed. He blew his chance to secure market access for our resources when he had the chance.

Now, it's true that as minister of immigration he was more focused on things like cutting health care for vulnerable refugees and making it harder for families to reunite with their loved ones in Canada and allowing corporations to abuse the temporary foreign worker program to drive down wages, but he should have been focused on fighting for Alberta jobs.

The facts are clear. The UCP leader's government in Ottawa did not get a single new pipeline built to the east or west coast. That is what's truly needed to get full value for our oil. They didn't get the job done despite having Conservatives in power in Ottawa and here in Edmonton for a decade. Not only that, but they caused more Canadians to oppose pipelines than ever before. Now he's asking folks in Alberta to trust him to fix a problem he created.

On this side of the House we take our responsibilities seriously. We will keep fighting for a pipeline to tidewater and a better price for our oil. That's what will ensure every working family feels our economic recovery, and we won't stop until that job is done.

North American Energy Industry Competitiveness

Mr. Barnes: I recently read an article by Seeking Alpha called Who Wins as Oil Price Differentials Widen in the Permian Basin? that focuses on the Texas commodity markets. The article talks about the widening price differential and how terrible it is that the average Texas basin differential was almost \$8. Will the differential get worse? Yes. The differential for Texas Permian basin blends is expected to increase through most of 2019 until "two large oil pipelines operated by EPIC and Plains All American become operational in late 2019."

Yes, Mr. Speaker, you heard that right. Two large pipelines being built by private companies are set to come online in late 2019. What glorious mysteries it is to consider that private companies would be willing to invest in something like pipelines, and despite the growing differential for Permian basin oil, investment in Texas has been torrid, nearly \$50 billion in capital investment last year. Fifty billion dollars. That accounts for a third of the total capital investment in the United States. Contrast that with Alberta. Northern Gateway: cancelled. Energy East: cancelled. Trans Mountain: halted and nationalized after being abandoned by the private sector. This has led to an outflow of investment that Jim Davidson, former CEO of GMP FirstEnergy, says is the worst he's ever seen. Enerplus, one of Canada's largest independent oil and gas producers, will spend 90 per cent of its capital in the United States this year and next. This investment flight has real-world consequences for Alberta families. It means that while Texas

families and communities are seeing more jobs, higher wages, and better benefits, Alberta families are being asked to take 10, 20, 30, and even 40 per cent wage reductions.

This is a result of that NDP's managed decline of our economy. It needs to stop, and this spring it will.

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

Universal Health Care

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Reflecting on the importance of universal health care has brought back memories from my younger years which I think are worth thinking about. When I was six, polio ran rampant through Edmonton, caused consternation among parents especially. The polio vaccine had not yet been developed, and we did not have universal health care. Working-class families were vulnerable. My clearest memory of this time took place in a house on our block. Mothers and children had gathered there because a child of the house had taken sick. The mothers were trying to determine whether the child had polio or not. I was very young and didn't understand it all, but I knew that the adults were afraid and that the child was quite sick.

As an adult I realized several things. One is that it was very reasonable to be afraid of polio. Without a preventative vaccine or treatment polio is a horrendous disease. Every block had a family affected by it: someone who was in an iron lung, someone who was in the hospital receiving treatment, some who had to go to the Shriners hospital in Winnipeg.

The second thing I realized was that without universal health care people couldn't afford to seek medical help. We must consider carefully the vital importance of having health care available and affordable for our loved ones and the benefits of having good health care for everyone. We must remember the anguish that people suffered when they didn't know if their loved ones would live or die and the desperation they must have felt.

Many things make us who we are, but I think the most important is that we take care of each other. How we treat those most in need in society tells us what kind of people we are.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Government Policies

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an interesting first month representing my incredible constituents of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake up here in Edmonton. There have been a lot of firsts. However, I don't think I was prepared for the full extent of the NDP's hypocrisy.

Last night we discussed why the NDP was refusing to provide the amount of coal-generated electricity imports from the United States. This NDP government went out of their way to shut down Alberta coal plants only to import coal-generated electricity from the United States. It's mind boggling why this Alberta NDP government would shut down businesses here in Alberta, destroy jobs here in Alberta, and destroy communities here in Alberta just to help their friends in the U.S. energy industry.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there was the NDP minister of the environment in question period last week, where again she tried to hide her work as an anti Alberta pipeline protester. I asked whether she now really supports pipelines, if she's actually changed her mind, whether the NDP regretted fighting against pipeline development in Alberta for so many years. Not only did she not have an answer; she denied it. She said that she had never opposed

pipelines, that it was all fake. She went on Twitter and even called me a liar. She even told reporters that it was a lie. So we showed her a transcript where she appeared at the National Energy Board hearing arguing against the Northern Gateway pipeline. Then we showed her a tweet encouraging an NDP MP to attend an anti Alberta pipeline protest. And then we showed her a photo of her attending that same anti Alberta pipeline protest.

We've asked time and again what advice this tar sands campaign, Greenpeace activist minister advised her department and cabinet regarding Alberta pipelines, but all we get is obstruction. Albertans are able to see through this NDP rhetoric in which they pretend to be proponents of pipelines when for so long they were protesters of pipelines. Last week, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said that she had a hundred per cent confidence in her minister. In a few months we'll see if Albertans share that . . .

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

Hold the clock a minute. I just want to think.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently this government announced significant changes to the area known as the Bighorn. This area is important to our local community, our energy industry, our forestry industry, our film and tourism industries, outdoor enthusiasts, and tens of thousands of recreational users that use it a year. The NDP brought forward their ineffective consultation process to happen over the Christmas holidays in an attempt to get their predetermined outcome rubber-stamped. My question is to the minister. What I would like to know is this: the North Saskatchewan regional plan is not even completed, so on what basis did you base your design of this new park system?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there have been years of consultation in this area. Clearwater county put out their tourism development strategy in 1992; the previous government did nothing. The regional advisory council made certain recommendations in 2014; the previous government did nothing. There's a tremendous economic development opportunity here, and I as environment minister have a responsibility to make sure that that happens, just like I have a responsibility to get pipelines built. As environment minister that is my responsibility, just like it's everyone in this caucus's and in this cabinet's responsibility.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. This minister has not consulted with the community, certainly not with Clearwater county. She misinformed us about a meeting she said she had with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House about it, most famously. This is a minister who has done everything possible to avoid talking to the very people that are going to be affected by this. There is a regional access committee. This minister has completely avoided talking to them. The question is this: why does she keep avoiding talking to the people that will be impacted by this? Why does she continue to hide from them and not have a real conversation, just stand up and do partisan rhetoric? Talk to our community. Stop hiding, Minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it curious that the hon. member wants to reject \$40 million of investment into his own constituency. He wants to reject economic development for his own constituents. He wants to reject the perspective of business owners in and around Nordegg. Economic development is all of our responsibility, just like getting pipelines built is all of our responsibility. That is something that we're focused on as a government.

Mr. Loewen: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody is rejecting anything. In fact, in these questions I never even said that we would reject capital investment. There are lots of important areas, including along highway 11, that I actually think inside this plan are a good idea. The question I have is about the consultation process that this minister has followed. Let's be clear. She has completely avoided the community. She will only do invite-only meetings. She will not meet with people that disagree with the plan that she has. She is only focused on foreign interest groups that are pushing for things in our backyards. She is ignoring business owners, who I do talk to all the time in Rocky Mountain House. She is also ignoring the community as a whole and Albertans across the whole province who want input into the process and, further to that, is ignoring the process in law. Again, will this minister commit to . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: . . . consulting with . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, time is up, and I didn't hear a question in there.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.
Go ahead, hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I've heard from almost 22,000 people who sent postcards. I've heard from countless area residents. I have heard from business owners. I'll read a couple of quotes. "Our residents enjoy outdoor recreation. Protected headwaters not only benefit the residents of Spruce Grove, the North Saskatchewan." That's from the mayors of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. I've heard from the member's own constituents, quote: there is a need for public investments and trail infrastructure, parking areas, outhouses, enforcement, that has not occurred under PLUZ management. These are business owners in the member's own riding. I have questions as to who he's representing, just as to who he's working for. I know who I'm working for, and that's the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: Keep the discussion about the policy matters, not the individuals on each side of the House.
Second main question.

Mr. Nixon: In making this announcement, the minister has shown a complete disregard for the comprehensive planning process for the region in an attempt to ram through changes. Now, leaked documents from the process show that these changes are completely against the recommendations of the regional advisory council in the area. The NDP is clearly not satisfied and wants to focus on the demands of their special-interest groups. Again, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: why are you spending so much time

and effort to avoid consulting with a full representation of the community, not a hand-picked representation of the community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, in August of 2018 the Clearwater trails partnership wrote me a letter that asked for the establishment of a west country PLUZ – this recommendation comes with it – a public land use zone, that people asked for. Clearwater county called this a positive step forward. The regional advisory council was made up of local reeves, residents, First Nations. They conducted 21 town halls. I know we didn't do exactly what the RAC advice said, because, for example, this proposal comes with an indigenous coal management for the parks areas, and that wasn't in the original RAC advice. So we are deviating in places where we think it's right to do so because that's . . .

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

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Clearwater Trails Initiative – I spoke to them again today – have not been consulted. That's what they say. Clearwater county says that they have not been consulted. The town of Rocky Mountain House says that they have not been consulted. West Fraser and those types of people working within the Bighorn have not been consulted. The minister has only done consultation with select, invite-only groups inside our constituency. Will she commit to holding an open, public town hall, open to all, right away with me?

Ms Phillips: Well, in fact, we do have a telephone town hall so that all Albertans can participate, Mr. Speaker. We are waiting to finalize the details on that, and as soon as those details are available, whether it's this week or next, we will be sharing them with the House. I have heard from other constituents, the hon. member's own constituents, and I find it so curious that he's not listening to them. Here are some. Declaring the area west of Nordegg a wildland provincial park aligns with our community's vision for the spaces we call home: that's Hollen from Nordegg. Lorri from Nordegg: "Like the Wild West, it appears people are not adhering to common-sense rules, and incredible wild areas are being destroyed. That's why we want to have protection for the wildland provincial park."

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Again, Mr. Speaker, nobody is saying that there shouldn't be protection of the west country; in fact, there should. The question is about the consultation process this minister followed to get to this spot. This NDP's record on consultation is terrible. They have abused Albertans over and over during their consultation process. Stakeholders in the public will now have until January 31 to provide feedback on this government's announcement. My question to the minister is this: will she commit today publicly in this House to release all of the stakeholder-public feedback received once the consultation period is complete, or will she continue to hide it as she has for other consultations?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, one of the things we're consulting on, Mr. Speaker, is the concept of a trails pass. We want to hear from local off-highway vehicle organizations. It's something they've been asking for for years, whether it is feasible to have a trails pass to access some of these new areas such as the west country PLUZ after we make those requisite investments in them. I find it curious that the member stands in his place and rejects those

kinds of investments in his own backyard for people that are his neighbours, that are his relatives. Why is he rejecting jobs and economic development in his own constituency?

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the minister just said in her own answer: private meetings, invite-only meetings with select people that she chooses, that she wants to meet with in the community. I've had town halls with well over 1,000 people there, where highways had to be shut for people to be able to have their views made on the record about this situation. This minister has disregarded a petition in this place with 21,000 signatures calling on her to do something different. Again, will she commit to public consultation, come to Rocky Mountain House, have a town hall, and talk to the people of my constituency? You'll find out what they think.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, this idea that there hasn't been consultation on the North Saskatchewan regional plan is incredibly disrespectful to the many women and men from that area and from elsewhere that participated in good faith in the regional advisory council process. There were 21 town halls associated with that. Since then, there have been other consultations, including the overall consultation on the North Saskatchewan regional plan. Now, what the member wants to reject is economic development for his constituency, I guess, because it's not his department, just like his leader, who didn't take responsibility for a pipeline because he said he wasn't responsible for it. There's a theme here.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody is rejecting economic development. We're talking about consultation and how the minister got to this place. This minister has not had public consultation. She's avoided it. She even did the announcement in Edmonton, not even in the communities that were involved, because she doesn't want to go and talk to them. Now, the stakeholders she lists as being consulted with have all confirmed with us that they were not consulted by this minister, so why does this minister keep standing up in this House and making things up and dodging the question? Will she have public consultation in Rocky Mountain House? Yes or no? Will she participate in it? Yes or no?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are plenty of opportunities over the 75-day consultation period for Albertans to engage, and certainly we have committed to a telephone town hall so that all Albertans who have a stake in this — folks who have written to me from Spruce Grove and Stony Plain; folks who have written to me from, yes, Nordegg and Rocky Mountain House; folks who have written to me from Red Deer, from Edmonton — can all participate because this is a fundamental Alberta priority to conserve landscapes and have economic development, just as a pipeline is a fundamental Alberta priority. We're working on that, and we're working on all of our shared values.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. There was a consultation process with the RAC, which this minister has rejected. The people from the RAC who she refers to as being consulted are not consulted. They're insulted by this minister because she disregarded what they said. They've made that clear to us. The

surveys from that process this minister has continued to hide from the public, but FOIP shows that well over 80 per cent of the public do not like the direction that they're going right now. Again, will this minister commit to actual public consultation, stop avoiding the people that are being impacted, stop hiding in Edmonton, and come to Rocky Mountain House and talk to our community? Yes or no? If not, what is she hiding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To be honest, the member's comments are insulting to the women and men who served on the regional advisory council. That council was made up of local reeves, residents, First Nations and Métis, farmers, tourism operators, scientists, business owners, ranchers, hunters, and industry. That council gathered input from thousands of Albertans, conducted 21 town halls to come up with their advice on regional planning, which included unanimous support for increased protection for parts of the Bighorn backcountry. In addition, there have been a number of tourism development strategies in that area. The previous government did nothing with them. This plan moves that forward.

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

Health Care Costs

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to have a serious conversation about getting health spending under control. One way that organizations can try to curb spending is to offer early retirement packages. This lets employees near retirement age leave with financial security and lets the company trim personnel costs. When Shaw recently opened up 16 early retirement packages, nearly 3,000 people applied, showing it can be a popular option. To the Minister of Health: would you consider offering early retirement packages to people working in our health care sector in order to help curb health care spending?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question. Certainly, Health has been working very hard to get spending under control. I'm very proud to say that we've moved from about 6 or 7 per cent down to just over 2 per cent in terms of annual growth. So considering the population growth and so forth, I think that the ministry and AHS are doing a good job to get spending under control, of which this suggestion could be an option.

Mr. Fraser: Another way to try to contain the growth in the health spending is through managed attrition. In an organization as big as Alberta Health Services there are thousands and thousands of positions, and we need to make sure that those positions are necessary and effective. If they aren't, then as people retire or leave those jobs, we need to consider not rehiring anyone else to fill them. This is a way that we contain costs without imposing job cuts. To the same minister: is there an attrition plan in place to help manage the growth of positions in Alberta's health care system and reduce its costs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question. Certainly, it's important to make sure that you are keeping a close eye on costs every step of the way. I think the minister and the ministry and Alberta Health Services have been doing a very

good job. I mean, I think options are open to be creative in this regard, but one option that's not open is to move to private health care when public health care serves the public efficiently and more equitably by far.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, I've outlined two ways to save our health care system money without having to lay anyone off. While you like to refer to these measures as billion-dollar cuts, the fact of the matter is that without some action on health care costs, we're actually putting the whole system at risk. Recently released performance metrics are showing that not only is the health care spending increasing, but results are getting worse. To the same minister: with increasing costs and decreasing performance, don't you think it's time that your government tried a new approach?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're keeping a very close eye on controlling costs every step of the way. I would dispute the assertion that performance is decreasing. I think that in targeted areas we see a marked increase in delivery of health care, especially in home care, acute care. In certain key areas it's definitely improving, and we can do that on a public health platform. The UCP is talking about privatization of health care. That's unconscionable, it's not a good use of money, and Albertans don't want it.

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

Gender X Marker on Government Documents

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Minister of Service Alberta visited my constituency and had a conversation with a particular constituent about the gender X marker. Would the minister expound on the number of people who are choosing to use the X marker?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am the Minister of Service Alberta. I'm also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good Alberta jobs, something I take seriously.

Our government took an important step by announcing human rights in Alberta by introducing the X marker. Albertans can now choose female, male, or X on their driver's licence, ID card, and other vital statistics records. Since June 177 Albertans have opted for the X as their gender identifier on their driver's licence or ID card, and 26 people have chosen the third marker on their vital statistics records.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. As my first follow-up, would you expand on the work that has been done across the government and the collaboration it has to do with other governments?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adopting the X marker is another step forward in making sure that Alberta is a province that respects, protects, and advances human rights. When doing this, we wanted to make sure that a third marker on our provincial

vital statistics documents aligned with other jurisdictions. By adopting the X as a third option, we followed the direction the federal government took on federally issued documents. This also puts us in line with other provinces and ensures that our provincial documents remain valid when we move, travel, or need access to interjurisdictional programs and services.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, is our government concerned about the Doug Ford government refusing to work alongside Alberta on respecting gender identity?

Mr. Malkinson: Just last week our government raised the transgender pride flag to commemorate all of those who have lost their lives due to transphobia and violence, and I was happy to be there, Mr. Speaker. It's very concerning to hear that the Conservative leader's best friends in the Ontario PC Party are currently debating whether or not trans people deserve the same basic human rights. Shame. I'm concerned that we are seeing similar ideologies on display here such as a UCP member comparing the pride flag to a swastika. These are views that are not welcome on this side of the House. I wish that the Leader of the Opposition would follow through on his pledge to reject these extreme views and kick this member out of the UCP.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Health Care Costs and Service Delivery

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Health care costs continue to rise. In 2013 a hospital stay cost 25 per cent more in Alberta than the national average while in 2017 it cost 35 per cent more. The average cost fell by \$34 to \$5,992 nationally but rose by \$459 in Alberta to \$8,112. The Yukon reduced the cost over the same period by \$835. Why hasn't the government been able to get hospital costs under control?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I pointed out in my last set of questions, we have moved down the rate of growth in health care spending here from 9.2 per cent in 2010 to just 2.2 per cent this year. That's in keeping with the growth of the population. I think that's a great accomplishment that we need to carry on. Certainly, there are measures to continue to look at for controlling costs, but that is not at the expense of health care and the security that health care provides for all Albertans.

Ms McPherson: Given that in 2013 Alberta's large urban trauma hospitals had an average of eight patients waiting for a hospital bed per hour, which has risen to 11 this year, and given that this metric has remained stagnant at medium urban hospitals and given that the government has increased its Health budget from \$18.6 billion to \$20.7 billion, why have Albertans not seen improvements to their health care experience?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as I said, I dispute this notion that we've not seen improvements in targeted areas. We certainly have. There's lots of room for improvement always because health care is dynamic and health care is most important not just for your own personal physical health but for peace of mind.

What you don't do is like the leader of the Alberta Party, who came in here unelected and proposed a billion dollars in cuts in health care.

Ms McPherson: Given that AHS released its provincial diverse populations strategy over six years ago and given that social determinants of health must be supported by sustainable programs in the social services sector and given that every week constituents complain to us about front-line social services workers who fail to understand or respect diverse needs, when will strategies to reach out to underserved populations start collecting input that supports service improvements?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very good question. It's very important that we integrate health care outcomes with other ministries as well. For example, in Education we are building partnerships between mental health strategies, between Alberta Health Services, social services, and Education. And, you know, the degree to which we can find that synchronicity, I think that you can really see marked improvements. What you don't do, though, is blow up hospitals, blow up health systems, or talk about private health care, as the UCP has been. That's not the way Albertans operate. That's not the way we deliver health care in this province.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Loewen: The NDP try to tell us that debt is under control, and they downplay it like it's no big deal. Albertans, on the other hand, know that \$50 billion of debt and \$2 billion in interest per year and growing is a big deal, and they know it jeopardizes our children's future. We know that the government didn't budget for the price differential we have now and that they banked on pipelines being built. The U of C says that the government was losing \$7.2 billion per year at \$38 differential. CAPP tells us that every dollar means \$210 million in lost provincial revenue. Can the minister give Albertans the facts, as of now, about how the differential will affect the government's bottom line?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Finance I'm also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good jobs.

You know, the differential is punishing to Albertans, Alberta's companies, and the oil and gas sector, and it's costing Canada \$80 million per day. That's why we're standing up for pipelines in this province. That's why we're taking the message to Ottawa. That's why the Premier of this province is in Ottawa today, and she will be having more to say tomorrow about the actions this government will be taking.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the differential has been caused by a lack of pipeline capacity and given that while Conservatives were building pipelines and approving pipelines, everyone that came before them, the NDP were opposing and protesting pipelines and given that when the NDP say that Conservatives couldn't get pipelines built, it's absolutely not true and given that the government has prematurely celebrated one pipeline three times that still isn't built, can the government point to one major pipeline that has been built in their three and a half years in power? Just one.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's easy. Line 3 is under construction right now, hon. member. But, you know, this hon.

member's leader spent 10 years in cabinet – 10 years – and they didn't get a single pipeline built to tidewater. And the leader says that it's not his responsibility. Well, on this side of the House, it's everyone's responsibility to fight for pipelines.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the minister just admitted that they haven't got one pipeline built – not one – and given that the NDP ministers often try to say that the NDP and the Premier supported pipelines from day one and given that that isn't exactly reflective of reality and given that the Premier spoke against Keystone XL pipeline and Northern Gateway and given that the environment minister protested Northern Gateway and given, Mr. Speaker, that isn't even close to support, can the government tell Albertans right here and now what they're doing to solve the price differential other than hiring anti-oil activists to represent the industry and giving lip service during this critical situation?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, what a pile of baloney that is. You know, when this member's leader was a cabinet minister in the federal government in Ottawa, the Supreme Court threw out the Northern Gateway thing. They laughed the federal government out of court because they'd failed so abysmally to properly consult. That's that government's record, and that leader says: well – you know what? – it's not my responsibility; I have no responsibility.

Mrs. Pitt: Point of order.

Mr. Mason: On this side, Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Transportation I can tell you that fighting for pipelines is my responsibility, and the same goes for everyone here.

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

Carbon Levy and Education Costs

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The carbon tax continues to drag down Alberta's families, businesses, and public services. This year alone the High Prairie school division's carbon tax bill could have paid for another teacher, and the Calgary board of education expects to lose over \$3 million. Across the province real educational priorities are taking a back seat, from staffing to maintenance to inclusion to class sizes. To the Minister of Education: how much could class sizes be reduced if schools were not subject to the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much for the question. It's very important, of course, that our climate action plan is not just in terms of revenue but in terms of an opportunity for people to learn and understand and to know that we are taking action on climate for the next generation. This resides in schools and everywhere, and as a way by which we can make sure that we are more efficient, we're building more energy-efficient schools, we're putting solar panels on the roofs of new schools and others, as you'll see soon. We're doing a job for now and for the next generation. I will make no apologies for . . .

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that rising transportation costs are eroding transportation services and given that students lucky enough to get a ride are stuck on the bus for longer and longer periods of time and given that there is no such thing as a solar-powered school bus and that the carbon tax hits

school transportation budgets particularly hard, to the same minister: how many more students could get on the bus, and how much shorter could the bus rides be if schools were not subject to the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that we can always make improvements to student transportation, especially in the rural areas, and we've been doing consultation to look for ways by which we can find those efficiencies. But just put it into context. The carbon levy we expect to be costing perhaps around \$18 million a year for all the school boards, and we've invested more than \$1.6 billion into our schools to hire teachers, to hire support staff, and to make sure that our education system is strong. Context is always important.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dyed diesel and gasoline are exempt from the carbon tax and given that the Premier has finally made a concession to reality by exempting oil and gas drillers from the carbon tax and given that no one in Alberta would say that education is less important than agriculture or the oil patch, why hasn't the Minister of Education asked the Premier to exempt schools and school boards from the carbon tax as well?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, as I said in my first reply, it's important that we are building the educating element of the climate action plan. Certainly, it's important. For example, when we are putting the solar panels on the roofs of new schools and others now as well, we have a real-time readout for kids to be able to use that as part of their education. We are saving literally millions of dollars by building new schools that are much more energy efficient, to a LEED silver standard. We look for ways by which we can help schools every step of the way, but certainly one way that you do not help them is to make cuts, cutting 4,000 . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Brewing Industry Policies

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, yesterday this government announced yet another change to the beer taxation system in Alberta. While we support the challenge against unfair nontariff barriers imposed by the Ontario liquor board, I can't help but wonder. Minister, you took three and a half years to challenge this inequity. Was that because you meshed ideologically with Wynne's government but now that Premier Ford is in charge, you've decided to challenge it?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say right at the outset that not only am I the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, but I am also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good jobs.

To answer the member's question, there was a Conservative government in Alberta for 44 years that did nothing to address the discriminatory practices that the Ontario government has against Alberta brewers. On this side of the House we stand up not only for economic diversification; we stand with Alberta brewers, and we will fight provinces that have unfair trading practices.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that when they lost their court case, Justice Marriott wrote that your grant program discriminated between craft brewers and craft beer based on provincial origin and given that the beer-is-good folly of yours cost Alberta taxpayers \$2.1 million, again to the minister: since your new small-brewer system looks remarkably similar to the old one we had before you started messing, how much in total are taxpayers on the hook for your failed beer policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much. In another role I'm the President of the Treasury Board, and in that role I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I'm also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good jobs in this province.

On the beer program we brought in yesterday, that was really supported by the small brewers in this province and the association that is part of that, I can tell you that the new markup rate, Mr. Speaker, will continue to support small brewers regardless of where they are from. The new program is better than the old programs. We're going to continue to see beer in this province, and great beer is what happens in this province when you support it.

2:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that this government has fostered a climate that sees investment fleeing the province by the billions and given that the business community simply needs this government to get out of its way, Minister, given your carbon tax, failed pipeline policy, layers of paperwork and bureaucracy coupled with poor policy decisions that continue to cost the hospitality industry, will you do the right thing and cancel the business-killing carbon tax?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how we got to the carbon tax from beer, but I can tell you that that member's questions are flat, just like the beer that he buys.

You know, we have seen the growth of the small brewers in this province nearly triple. There are over 105 small brewers here as a result of the programs that we have supported for Albertans and the liquor industry. The liquor industry is thriving under this government; it never did under that government. I'm proud every day for the diversity that is there on the shelves.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Health Care Costs and Service Delivery (continued)

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services spent \$360 million more this year than last, yet fewer surgical procedures are being performed. Our health care budget has increased by over \$2 billion since this NDP government took office, so why is AHS, under this government's management, cutting front-line services, ultimately increasing wait times for patients?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's important to always keep a focus on wait times here in the province of Alberta. We have more than 280,000 surgeries performed across Alberta by 55 different sites. You know, we know that as our population grows, proportionally so, too, do the demands on the health system. That's why in the budget this year we put \$40 million to focus on wait time reductions for surgeries, specifically cancer, cardiac, hip and knee,

and so forth. You know what's interesting? The UCP voted against that very thing.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, let us start with the south zone. Given that the total number of procedures performed decreased by 4 per cent and given that in 2015 hip wait times were 42 weeks versus 49 weeks today and knee surgeries in 2015 were 48 weeks compared to 55 weeks today in the south zone, can you please explain the rationale for these cuts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we have been making serious investments in targeted areas to reduce wait times in our health care system. It's very important to see as well, from the CIHI statistics that just came out, that globally we moved from about a 9 per cent increase in health care when there were \$100 barrels of oil, you know, and not so much focus on efficiency to this year, where we're at a 2.2 per cent increase, which is in keeping with inflation and the population. So you know what? I think they've been doing a pretty good job. We can always do better, but let's hear it for Alberta Health Services.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, in the central zone, the Red Deer region, they've been asking for this government to enhance services, but given the fact that this government has cut back on total surgeries performed in this region by over 5 per cent while cutting knee surgeries by a whopping 8.4 per cent – and here you are spouting out that you're increasing these things – and given that in 2015 it took people 27 weeks to access those knee surgeries versus today, where they're waiting now 39 weeks – one more time for our viewers, very clearly – what is this government's rationale for cutting these vital operations despite your increased spending? What are you spending money on? Why are you cutting surgeries?

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's important to focus and target reductions in surgeries. For example, Alberta Health Services did focus on cardiac, hip and knee, and cancer surgeries as well. Putting in, as I said, that \$40 million focus on wait time reductions, you know, is having a targeted positive effect. You can't not do those things if you don't make those investments. If you fire 4,000 nurses, as the UCP suggested, or give \$700 million in tax cuts to the richest 1 per cent, that's money that doesn't go . . .

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

Dementia Care

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, since I first started asking about Alberta's poor track record on dementia care, I've heard from Albertans all over the province. They've shared their stories of poor conditions in long-term care facilities, real struggles accessing home care, and continued stigma around dementia and aging in general. Recently the Dementia Network Calgary released an advocacy survey. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents felt that Alberta's dementia strategy should shift from a task-based model to a relational model of care. To the Minister of Health: is that on your radar, and if so, what are you doing to make it happen?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's a very good question from the hon. member. As we know that we're seeing increasing rates of dementia across the province, we need to have not just a targeted strategy but a larger societal one as well, so building and educating along with having more home care, and to be able to make investments. Since 2015 we've invested about \$6.8 million into measures to give families tools to help support their loved ones. I mean, I know that this is a very difficult thing, but certainly we're all in it together, and we need to support each other, especially when dementia strikes a family.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the respondents to the Dementia Network survey said: "The biggest problem is not enough staff. Some patients need more . . . care. It's appalling to see residents sitting in soiled clothing, unable to eat in front of a TV for hours. They deserve better." Albertans do deserve better. To the Minister of Health: what are you doing to fix this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this condition and others are very, very difficult. We certainly feel for individuals and families and staff that work with dementia and work in facilities such as this. We know that we need to look for better diagnosis, early diagnosis, better brain health, and stronger community supports for years to come. By investing in health care, by redoubling and making sure we're investing in home care and community supports, I think that together with all parties we can help to relieve some of the suffering that dementia does cause.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that system navigation was identified as a big problem and given that people are struggling as full-time caregivers and simply don't have the ability or expertise to also be a system navigator and given that this creates a huge gap between haves and have-nots, between those who are able to advocate and those who are left to fend for themselves, and given that one of the best navigation tools available today is the First Link line, to the Minister of Health. There's some concern that this important resource may be cancelled. I'll ask you for a simple yes or no. Will you continue funding First Link?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. We know that since 2015, in fact, the Health ministry did expand the First Link program with \$1.95 million more of funding and also has been investing in specifically trained dementia nurses through the Health Link, 811. So, yes, absolutely. Having a knowledgeable navigation through the system is absolutely essential. You want to make sure you keep it simple, you want to make sure you keep it powerful, and you want to make sure that there are lots of different options available for people.

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

Rural Crime

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago the UCP tried to convince the NDP government that rural crime had reached epidemic proportions. We introduced a motion for an emergency debate, and 200 rural residents, most of them victims of

crime, filled the galleries to help us press home this very point. But the Government House Leader, after noting that his family vehicle, too, had been broken into a couple of times, indicated that crime was certainly a worry but didn't really quite qualify as an emergency. Minister, why did you refuse to recognize that rural Alberta was in a crisis back then?

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Well, of course, this government has recognized that there is a significant challenge in rural Alberta with respect to rural crime. That's why we took action eight months ago to ensure that we put money into the system, to ensure that we're investing in RCMP officers and civilian staff and prosecutors in courtrooms. That strategy is working. The members opposite were the ones who voted against that strategy and then took additional months to study the issue.

2:30

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, let's start with a fact here. This government could not even recognize that we were in a crisis back then, and given that new crime stats released in 2017 paint a picture that should have been alarming to the minister at that particular time because they showed that the firearm homicide rate during that time in rural Alberta was double that of urban Alberta, Minister, were you actually not aware of this shocking statistic or did you just choose to ignore this stat?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We were absolutely aware of the fact that rural crime was on the rise in certain areas. In fact, I spoke to that in the House and in the media when I announced our rural crime strategy. The fact that there was a challenge with rural crime in Alberta is the reason that we launched our strategy. Meanwhile the members opposite voted against that strategy – they wanted additional time to study the issue – and they voted against additional RCMP officers again in the budget. I think that the government has moved forward on addressing this. I wish the opposition would do the same.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister loves to point out that the UCP did not vote for her government's \$10 billion deficit accompanied by the high debt and given that she fails to tell Albertans that her never-ending triage protocol, introduced in early 2017, has resulted in numerous cases being tossed, letting criminals walk free and victims being revictimized by the system, and given that in 2015-16 she reduced the budget for Crown prosecutors, Minister, how can you pretend to be a champion of justice in the face of this record?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think that we ought to deal with facts here in this place, and the fact is that we introduced a strategy to deal with rural crime, and that strategy is having an impact. I think that that's good for the people of the province. I understand that the members opposite are upset that we've had an impact and that we've brought down rural crime rates, but that doesn't change the facts. We're going to continue working with the RCMP. We're going to continue working with the Crown prosecutors and with all rural Albertans.

I'll just go ahead and add that I'm also responsible . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Municipal Cannabis Transition Program

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, the legalization of cannabis should not leave municipal governments scrambling to cover the costs of enforcement and education around where and when it is appropriate to light up. My constituents are concerned that the municipal cannabis transition program fails to recognize the true costs to their municipality and that property taxes will need to increase to cover off this shortfall. Does this government intend to line their pockets with taxes from cannabis while the municipalities are left hung out to dry?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we expect to have a net loss in the first two years as a result of setting up a program to distribute, supply chain, watch, inspect cannabis in this province. There are start-up costs. We have dealt with the municipalities and provided them \$11.2 million over two years so that they can address their enforcement costs. Municipalities under 5,000: their enforcement costs for policing are paid for by the province of Alberta, so we're going to pick up those costs, of course.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities have start-up costs also and given that the federal government agreed to give the province 75 per cent of the taxation from cannabis on the condition that significant portions of the funding are shared with municipalities and given that the tools required to keep our communities safe and drugs out of the hands of children will increase costs to municipalities and given that a number of my municipalities will receive no assistance to help with education and enforcement, is it the opinion of this government that these municipalities will have no increased costs associated with the legalization of cannabis?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a minister of municipalities I know that fighting for good jobs and pipelines will actually bring money to our municipalities to help us with cannabis. In that vein, there are three provinces that funded municipalities in this country, and we're one of them. We're ahead of the game on this. I've spoken extensively to my municipalities. We had a Cannabis Secretariat, consulted with them, and we know that we will adapt over time. We will see what is coming in. We knew that setting up a program like this in the province would cost millions and millions of dollars. You know, it was like Y2K. Everybody thought . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that in municipalities in my constituency with a population over 5,000 people have great concern that the meagre funding under the municipal cannabis transition program is a pittance compared to the costs they will incur to keep their communities safe, will the minister commit to meet with the urban municipalities to discuss adequate distribution of the excise funds to all municipalities in a manner that respects the role municipalities play to keep our communities safe?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: All right. Thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. I meet with the AUMA board routinely

and other municipalities routinely on this, and we did say, going forward, that once we have more information on what effects this is having across our province, we will evaluate. That is something we promised to do. We have acknowledged there are costs across the province, some more than others in particular, with the province setting up this massive program of legalization that was put upon us by the feds. We've done an admirable job. I'm very happy with what the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance and our Minister of Justice have done.

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

Calgary Board of Education Construction Project Management Costs

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, over the past two years the Calgary board of education was required to cover \$43 million for unfunded project management services for new schools, including \$20 million in actual construction costs. To a minister: why do you make the Calgary board of education dig into their reserves to build new schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the Minister of Infrastructure I, too, fight for pipelines.

One of the ways we get the revenue to build schools in this province – and we have done a remarkable job in the past number of years in an NDP government of building schools. It's because we decide that children are worth it. Children are worth the effort to build schools. I'll tell you something else, Mr. Speaker. When we decide, unlike the opposition, who cries wolf over consultation but doesn't do the effective consultation to keep children safe in schools . . .

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

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister doesn't care about kids enough to take away the \$1.7 million in interest charges on that \$20 million – that's actually \$40 million altogether that the schools have had to pay – and given that making the board of education fund tens of millions of dollars out of their reserve places unnecessary pressure on their finances and given that the board traditionally designates its reserve for improving the classroom experience for students, to the minister: why do you expect school boards to fund construction costs out of reserves, which are meant to be spent on kids in the classroom?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I find it incredibly rich that when I shared a bench with the member opposite, he was not all that concerned that schools had to use reserve funds. It's pretty incredible that now he's changed his tune. I'll tell you who cares about schools. This government cares about schools, and we care about children.

Mr. McIver: Well, given that I am happy to talk about a floor crossing any time the minister wants to and given that the board of education recently submitted its \$40 million-plus project management bill for schools to the government and given that the interest payments are now lost forever from the classroom, to the minister: will you ensure at least that this bill is now paid quickly so the board can redirect it back to the classroom where it belongs, and will you reimburse the interest costs to the board of education?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we've seen since 2015 is that this government you see over here has financed 240 school projects across the province of Alberta. You know, for a good 20 years the members on the opposite side were failing to build those schools on time. We had overcrowded classrooms, schools that were crumbling, and we turned that around. In Calgary, certainly, they received a great number of those schools, and we're working always to make sure that they get what they need as opposed to cutting 4,000 teachers, making things hurt.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Logging in the Mustang Hills

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's forests provide many economic and environmental benefits. The Mustang hills, located along highway 66 and adjacent to the Elbow River, is scheduled for timber harvesting operations in the next few months. Located in sensitive wildlife habitat, the Mustang hills also draw hundreds of recreational visitors each year, thousands, in fact. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is being done by the department to address the concerns raised regarding logging in this area?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard from local residents that they want the best possible balance between supporting the economy and protecting the environment when it comes to timber harvesting in the Mustang hills. I want to thank the Member for Banff-Cochrane for his continued advocacy. Spray Lake Sawmills, based in Cochrane, saw public input on its harvest operation. Because of that, they've removed one of the cutblocks that they were going to harvest, they've increased retention within blocks, they changed block design for better aesthetics, and they better protected nondesignated trails.

The Speaker: Thank you.

First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given the significant recreation opportunities in this area, will the department work collaboratively with recreation stakeholders to safeguard existing trails by putting a buffer around them?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, the company has been proactive with hiking trails in the area and sought to address concerns of those who enjoy them. Nondesignated trails near the area's natural boundary will be respected during harvest operations. Forests are naturally dynamic, and harvesting, when done right, can ensure biodiversity and ecological health. Over thousands of years Alberta forests have evolved from natural disturbances such as wildfire. Harvesting has evolved to resemble natural disturbance patterns that contribute to biodiversity and wildlife habitat. By law Alberta requires reforestation be initiated within two years of completing harvest operations.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what steps are being taken through the operating ground

rules to protect watercourses, wetlands and ensure that there are no negative outcomes for aquatic species and water quality?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, harvest areas are designed to maintain cover and different habitat types for a variety of species. Areas such as watercourses are protected with buffers, and species of special concern have additional management strategies addressed through timber harvest planning and operating ground rules. The rules to protect species like bull trout and pure strain westslope cutthroat trout. As further steps to assure sustainability, Alberta has a risk-based system in place to assess and review forest industry field operations. The forest operations monitoring program is designed to concentrate inspection activities on areas of high environmental and sustainable value.

The Speaker: Thirty seconds, hon. members.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Holiday Season

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The holiday season in Alberta has arrived. This festive time of year is remarkable and outstanding, particularly in Alberta. In our amazing province when we celebrate, we celebrate our people and our diversity, and we do this by hosting events of various kinds, religions, cultures that bring Albertans of all walks of life together. No matter what occasion is being celebrated, the declarations, feasts, songs, and music bring joy and happiness to all as we celebrate our differences.

In my amazing riding of Calgary-Glenmore the churches are lively with Christmas choirs to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and restaurants are cozy with Christmas carols. Synagogues are brightened for Hanukkah celebrations, the Jewish festival of light celebrating the rededication of the holy temple of Jerusalem. Community events are hosted to celebrate Eid Milad un-Nabi, the birth of the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – along with Eid-e-Zehra, the festival of Fatima's family. Homes are decorated to celebrate family and friends.

One of the greatest gifts we can give to ourselves and to the world is to reach out to those who need assistance or companionship at this time of year. Albertans embrace the tradition of sharing hope with others and extend it throughout the year to make our homes, our communities, and all of Alberta a better place to live.

The holidays are a chance to embrace these honoured customs, enjoy time together, and reflect on our blessings. They also remind us how fortunate we are to live in a province where all traditions and faiths can coexist peacefully. I extend my best wishes to Albertans. May this holiday season find all Albertans enjoying the warmth and fellowship of family and friends world-wide.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Loewen: The price differential is the difference in price between the market price for oil and what we receive for our oil. Currently sitting at \$40 per barrel, this situation is an immediate crisis and is seriously jeopardizing thousands of jobs. This situation is the result of the NDP and the federal Liberals failing to get even one major pipeline built. When the federal and provincial Conservatives were in power, four major pipelines were built, increasing exports by over a million barrels of oil per day. Also, Northern Gateway was approved. What is the NDP record? Northern Gateway was cancelled, Energy East was purposely

killed, Trans Mountain is in continued limbo, and Keystone XL is stalled again. The federal Liberals have brought forward bills C-48, the tanker ban, and C-69, also known as the no-more-pipelines bill.

The NDP stand up in this House and say over and over how the Premier has been the oil and gas sector's biggest supporter since day one. The facts, however, say otherwise. The Premier spoke against Northern Gateway publicly. The environment minister appears in pictures at rallies against it and also went to the NDP hearing against it. They did absolutely nothing to protest its cancellation. Energy East was killed, and the NDP responded with a letter. The Premier has publicly spoken against Keystone XL. The NDP did nothing to object to Bill C-48, the tanker ban, that all but nullifies any pipeline to the northern B.C. coast. The NDP has done too little, too late to object to Bill C-69.

The NDP have been giving lip service to the Trans Mountain pipeline, but they have sat on their hands while we've seen delay after delay because of their B.C. NDP allies and their radical anti-oil friends. Now we have the price differential growing and in response the NDP picking an anti-oil activist to be one of the envoys. You can't make this stuff up.

On this side of the House we have consistently supported all pipelines. We can only hope that the Premier and the NDP put aside partisanship and their anti-oil ideology and join us to come up with an immediate solution to the price differential and then work expeditiously to get pipelines built. Conservatives have experience in actually getting pipelines built. You do it by supporting all pipelines, not by campaigning against them, and you appoint pro oil and gas advocates, not anti-oil activists.

We need to get this done in order to get Albertans back to work and to realize the full value of our resources.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Bill 30

Mental Health Services Protection Act

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce the Mental Health Services Protection Act for first reading.

This bill will aim to ensure that Albertans are able to access professional mental health care in safe and regulated environments. It sets out licensing requirements and standards for residential substance use treatment facilities, and it will create a college of counselling therapy to ensure standards of practice. Our goal is peace of mind for patients, for their families, and for all Albertans.

I look forward to the discussion ahead and to making sure that we work together to ensure that mental health services are protected for Alberta patients. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of the Alberta REA Strategic Review: Rural Economic Impacts, 2013, which I referenced in my speech last night when I mentioned that the REAs had been working towards sustainability since before the election of this government and had tried to engage the former government to work with them.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Minister Miranda, Minister of Culture and Tourism, pursuant to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act the Alberta Foundation for the Arts 2017-18 annual report; pursuant to the Historical Resources Act the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation 2017-18 annual report; pursuant to the Alberta Sport Connection Act the Alberta Sport Connection 2017-18 annual report.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe there were three points of order. I wish to advise that on the third point of order the Member for Airdrie has withdrawn the point of order.

I believe the first one was the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. The Opposition House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, and I'll rise on 13(2). He called a point of order during a question that I was asking, which was clearly in the leader's role. It seems to us that you're now providing different instructions for leaders' questions, and we'd like some clarification. You indicated that you were having trouble, one, hearing a question. Well, there was clearly a question at the end. That would be my first point to you. Second point. As you know and have already ruled, no doubt, leaders' questions have significantly more leeway in preambles, so we'd just like to get some clarification on what you're trying to tell us.

The Speaker: So it's under 13(2), and it is with respect to the point that I made with respect to the question. Did I understand correctly?

Hon. member, before I comment on that, my notes suggest that maybe the point of order that you raised was with respect to that, but it was to the interjection by myself and why I did that? Is that correct?

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, I do hope I'm on the same issue as you are. Let me just read a little bit from the Blues that I have with respect to your comments. I'm not going to read the whole thing. It was quite long.

She is also ignoring the community as a whole and Albertans across the whole province . . . ignoring the process . . . Again, will this . . .

I interjected because in actual fact, for all of the members present, I rely on the table, who are very meticulous with respect to their control of time, and you had clearly gone over the time limit on the basis of what, at least, I heard, and I still hadn't heard a question. You asked for my explanation, and that was it.

Is there something . . .

Mr. Nixon: We're on a different point of order. I apologize. Nobody called a point of order at that time. So if the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky confused you — you did certainly point out that I was out of time, and I was out of time. You stopped the clock, as you should, Mr. Speaker, as is your role. You did a great job on that. I can be long winded sometimes. Ask my colleagues.

We are referring to another comment later on where you said a similar thing, but it was not to do with the clock. Mr. Speaker, I guess maybe there can be some confusion. Under 13(2) I just would like that we get some clarification, then, on the rules around leaders'

questions, that they have not changed, and if that's the case, then we can just move on and call it a misunderstanding.

The Speaker: Well, I'm not sure if there's a misunderstanding or not. I think we agree on 13(2) with respect to the intervention on time.

With respect to the other matter did you question me with respect to preambles or the leeway given to the first core questions?

Mr. Nixon: That's correct, Mr. Speaker. You may not recall it, but at one time you did say, you know: I have not seen a question. The second time was for the time limit question. It prompted a question similar to how it would when we were dealing with questions outside of the leader's role, and that's the clarification I'm looking for you to give to us as a House. I'm just asking the question this way. Under 13(2) have the rules changed for leaders' questions? Yes or no?

The Speaker: I believe that, unless I've missed something, to my knowledge the standing orders are approved by this House, and, no, they haven't. I can give you the same speech as I gave the other day to the Government House Leader there, who is attentively listening, that the standing orders are approved by this House. Accordingly, I ruled on the context at the time.

I hope that brings closure to the matter.

Mr. Nixon: It does.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 29

Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and welcome to the chair. I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of the Minister of Labour to move second reading of Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018.

This act governs the relationship between employers, employees, and unions for government of Alberta staff; nonacademic staff at publicly funded postsecondary institutions; and some agencies, boards, and commissions. This government has made significant changes to labour relation laws over the last few years. We updated the Public Service Employee Relations Act and the Labour Relations Code in 2016 to include essential service provisions. These changes were needed following a Supreme Court decision on the right to strike. We also made changes that moved academic postsecondary staff from the Post-secondary Learning Act to the Labour Relations Code.

The changes proposed in Bill 29 build upon these earlier updates. They will provide more public-sector employees with their constitutionally protected freedom to collectively bargain, and they will create greater consistency for the postsecondary sector. If passed, these changes would further align the Public Service Employee Relations Act with Supreme Court of Canada decisions that employees have a right to collective bargaining. Currently under the act there are five groups or classifications of employees that are restricted from joining a bargaining unit. These are systems

analysts, budget officers, hearing officers, auditors, and disbursement control officers. Proposed changes would remove the restrictions on these employee classifications so they would no longer be prevented from collective bargaining. If passed, these changes would take effect June 1, 2019.

Other proposed changes would remove restrictions on what can go to arbitration, like pensions and job classifications. This means that if the employer or the union is unable to reach an agreement, they have the option to resolve the matter through arbitration. These proposed changes align with our essential services legislation, which states that all issues can be considered under collective bargaining. They would also give public-sector employees arbitration rules similar to those under the Labour Relations Code, creating more consistency for Albertans.

Other changes will create greater consistency for the postsecondary sector. Changes to legislation in 2017 brought academic staff at postsecondary institutions under the Labour Relations Code. Bill 29's proposed changes will move nonacademic staff from the Public Service Employee Relations Act to the Labour Relations Code. If passed, these changes would mean that all unionized staff at postsecondary institutions would be governed by the Labour Relations Code. This will create consistency for our postsecondary institutions. It also means that nonacademic staff will benefit from recent updates to the Labour Relations Code that are not in the Public Service Employee Relations Act. I understand that the minister is proposing that these changes will not take effect until July 1, 2022, to give postsecondary institutions time to adjust.

Together these proposed changes would give more public-sector workers the right to unionize, bring the Public Service Employee Relations Act in line with existing constitutional protections for employees, and create more consistency in the way labour relations are governed in our province.

I hope that everyone in this Chamber shares the excitement and will vote with me to support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hunter: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to rise and speak in this House during second reading on Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018. Bill 29 amends the Public Service Employee Relations Act, the Post-secondary Learning Act, and the Labour Relations Code. It makes three primary changes that, in my opinion, could have major implications on Alberta's future and therefore deserve to have close scrutiny by this House.

The first change repeals section 30 from PSERA, that restricts matters which may proceed to a compulsory arbitration board. The second change repeals five position classifications from the list of exclusions from the bargaining unit. The final change transitions nonacademic staff at public postsecondary institutions from PSERA to the Labour Relations Code, giving them compulsory arbitration rights.

3:00

I think it is important, Madam Speaker, to finish the sentence that was made by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert. What he said was that it would allow them to have arbitration rights. But it's important to remember that these are compulsory arbitration rights, which is, again, something that is a little different than what he said.

Now, you would think that at a time of economic crisis, which the province of Alberta is currently in, the government's focus

would be more about bringing forward more relevant legislation that would encourage economic growth and stability. The actions of late from our current government have increasingly put at risk future generations of this province, that will foot the bill for their legislation for years to come. Unfortunately, Albertans will suffer the consequences of this government's mismanagement.

Now, in getting into the details and minutiae of this bill, it appears that the government is repealing section 12(1)(f) as part of some kind of deal with AUPE to get them to move on other areas of collective bargaining. The government says that PSERA is unconstitutional, but they've lost their case at various levels, from arbitration to the Labour Relations Board to the Court of Queen's Bench and the Alberta Court of Appeal.

The coming-into-force date of June 1, 2019, doesn't give the universities enough time. Individuals in the five positions under section 12(1)(f) were previously excluded because these people were privy to sensitive information. That fact has not changed. The universities asked for between two to four years, Madam Speaker, in their submissions to the government and are only getting six months. This isn't enough. This isn't even half of what they had asked for. I don't understand how the June 1, 2019, date came about. It seems to be an arbitrary date that has just been picked out of the sky. I'm not sure exactly how they expect the HR departments and the legal teams to be able to get ready for that date. I'm wondering whether or not this government would be interested in future amendments, that we will be bringing forward, that will talk about the changes to these dates so that these governing bodies have the necessary time to be able to properly implement and to make this transition.

Now, from some of the communications where we tried to reach out to some of the employees that are part of the five categories that were excluded, we're finding that they don't want to be unionized and are waiting to see the results of these fights to determine what happens to their own personal jobs. They've not been asked what they want, and they've not been consulted. What I'd like to know is whether or not this government, under the Labour minister, would be willing to table in this House what consultation was done and how robust it was so that we can find out what percentage of these some 19,000 members that are affected will actually be in favour of this.

We've seen countless examples over the tenure of this government where consultation has been lacklustre at best, so I think that it's only natural for us to ask the question, Madam Speaker: really, have they done the proper consultation? Is there a reason why they're pushing this forward in six months and doing it so quickly?

Now, I guess the question that we have to ask ourselves, as we've seen with some of the other legislation, is: why has this happened? Why have they done it? I recognize that they state that they didn't get the job done correctly at the beginning and that they are just amending their past legislation so that they can say that they got it right. But, really, who have they gotten it right for, Madam Speaker? The question that I have and that many people I've talked to have is: is this actually just getting it right for their friends the unions, or is this actually getting it right for the public service sector at large? I have to say that I question whether or not they're actually getting it right for these 19,000 some-odd members of nonacademic staff.

Now, what's interesting about this is that this legislation means that employees don't have any way to vote to get out of the union or to make change to the unions that they're involved in. This is something that we've seen many cases of, where people have come to this government and said: "We did not want to have you unionize our organization. You went ahead and did it anyways."

They have created a situation where they say that it's fair representation, but they've taken away the rights of individuals to have the most common way of being able to vote about whether they're going to be a union or not, the secret ballot. This is the sort of thing that we've seen in the past, and we're concerned that as possibly the dying days of this government come, they'll be in a situation where they're trying to stack the deck in their favour and get much of Alberta's public sector unionized. This is the sort of thing that we see with this kind of bill, and it obviously makes us wonder: is this really in the best interest of Albertans, or is this in the best interest of their union buddies?

The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert said that this was just bringing it in line with past legislation and Supreme Court rulings. Well, let's just talk about that for a second. In a number of decisions since AFL versus the Mounted Police was decided by the Supreme Court, the Alberta Labour Relations Board and the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench have all ruled that section 12(1)(f) is constitutional. Once again, let's remember that in 2017 the NDP denied they were removing the rights of secret-ballot votes even though they did for many Albertans. This is exactly what they went ahead and did and took it away. This is another example that the NDP is forcing people to unionize without their consent.

Now, there's another section in here, in this bill, Madam Speaker, that's concerning, and this is the removal of section 30. What's concerning about this is that section 30 basically states what individuals can bring forward to the compulsory arbitration board, which issues and who can bring them forward. The issues that they're allowed to bring forward to the compulsory arbitration board are things such as:

- (a) the organization of work, the assignment of duties and the determination of the number of employees of an employer;

That's just the first group.

- (b) the systems of job evaluation and the allocation of individual jobs and positions within the systems;
- (c) selection, appointment, promotion, training or transfer;
- (d) pensions.

Let's just go back, first of all, really quickly, to the first part there: "the organization of work, the assignment of duties and the determination of the number of employees of an employer." Let's just think about this for a second, Madam Speaker. This government has said many times that they are going to get to a path to balance by 2023. First of all, we know a couple of things. One, the differential that we're dealing with in oil and gas is certainly going to put a hole in their budget. But this also could cost this government the ability to be able to balance their budget as well and for any subsequent government thereafter. Here's the situation. Because it says that they're actually going to get rid of section 30, they will be able to determine the number of employees of an employer.

Let's give you an example, Madam Speaker. In the event that the public-sector cleaners decided that they were understaffed and that they needed to have double the number of cleaners to clean the buildings for the government, under this they could take that to the compulsory arbitration board, and the compulsory arbitration board might just say: "You know what? The government says that, no, you're not underrepresented and that you have enough people, but because the union says that we need at least double, we'll give you 50 per cent more."

3:10

Now, can you imagine, Madam Speaker, if every public-sector union said this and did this? How would that affect the budget? How would that affect Alberta taxpayers' taxes? I think that it would

completely destroy their budget and their ability to stand up in this House and tell us that they have a path to balance on their budget. I don't believe that if they're going to implement something like this, they would be able to do that. When they allow unions to be able to go and add an extra 19,000 nonacademic staff to this as well, they're now in a situation where all of these groups can go before a compulsory arbitration board.

In my opinion, those are grounds, obviously, for this government and especially for the Finance minister to start to question and ask: "Is this sustainable? Is this something that can be sustained?" I can't see how it will be, Madam Speaker. I don't know how they can be good stewards with the taxpayers' dollars when this is the provision that they're now offering unions, their close friends and allies.

These are some very concerning questions that I have about this, and I hope that this government would be very interested in having a robust discussion as we get into Committee of the Whole. Like I said, Madam Speaker, we will be bringing forward some amendments to this.

Probably the two biggest concerns that we have, just in conclusion, Madam Speaker, are that we are concerned that this government will not be able to balance their budget based upon these kinds of rights that they're giving to the unions, adding an extra 19,000 people to unions and not allowing them to have the right to be able to change unions or get out of unions, and then the last thing, obviously, is this idea that the universities have asked for two to four years and were given a mere six months. By not giving them enough time to be able to make that transition, it would almost seem like this government for some strange reason needs to be able to get these things done as quickly as possible.

I cannot support this bill presently unless there are more amendments that could come forward that would be able to make this less bad. I hope that all members of this Assembly will take a look at this and vote no on this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under section 49 I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Just a reminder for all members of the House that the motion for the previous question serves to curtail the debate. After it is moved and carried, no further amendments can be made. The motion may be debated by every member who wants to speak to the main question.

Hon. member, would you like to speak? No? You're just going to move it? Okay.

Anybody else wishing to speak to the motion for the previous question?

Mr. Nixon: I would encourage my members, certainly my colleagues, to actually vote no on this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you already spoke to it.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Speaker, this is considered a new motion, to which I was speaking. My standing earlier would be considered standing to speak to . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you've already spoken. When you introduce a previous motion like the question, you have time to debate it when you introduce it. If you choose not to speak, you cannot speak again.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Speaker, if I can state that this is considered a completely separate, debatable, substantive motion, meaning that the clock is reset. Everyone who spoke to the previous motion is allowed to speak again to the current motion. If you like, I could cite the sections for you. I've done my homework on this one. Every member who has spoken previously to the motion on second reading of the bill has the privilege of speaking again to the motion that the question now be put, with the clock reset.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, a member may move that the question be now put. The previous question cannot be, then, proposed by the mover of the motion, which means that just like when you introduce any other amendments, you have an opportunity to speak to the amendment when you introduce it. That's my ruling. It's in the standing orders, and you can refer to *Beauchesne's* if you'd like, which is paragraph 522(1).

All right. Any other members wishing to speak? Seeing none, I will put the vote on the question.

[Motion carried]

The Acting Speaker: We will now put the question on the main motion.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:16 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Phillips
Babcock	Jansen	Piquette
Carlier	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley	Nielsen	

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Gill	Schneider
Barnes	Hunter	Starke
Clark	McIver	van Dijken
Ellis	Nixon	Yao
Fildebrandt		

Totals: For – 38 Against – 13

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a privilege to be able to stand and to speak during Committee of the Whole on Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. One of the interesting things about this bill has been that as we've had the opportunity of being able to go back to our respective ridings and talk with the stakeholders, those people who are actually physicians in our areas, we've found that a majority of the people we have talked to have said that they knew nothing about this bill.

Originally we had said that this bill needs to go to committee so that we could hear from physicians, we could hear of their concerns. We are not saying that this is a bad bill. We're saying that the consultation has not been done. For us over on this side of the House we actually have no physicians on this – well, actually, I should say that in terms of this caucus we have no physicians that we can have representation for physicians. It would be, I believe, incumbent upon this government to be able to send this back to committee in order to be able to hear from physicians and to find out what the process was and what happened. But in spite of that plea, this government has decided that they are not going to do that. So what we did is that we went back to physicians. We sent out requests to find out how the process had worked, what had happened.

I'd like to tell you about a letter I received from Dr. John Huang, and he is president of the Eye Physicians and Surgeons Association of Alberta and very qualified to speak on this bill, yet he will have no opportunity to do that. Therefore, he has provided me with a letter. I will read portions of this letter just to be able to show you that they have not been consulted and also to show you that they have a grievance with this whole process going forward.

He says that he has deep concerns about Bill 24 and would like to have "proper consultation occur before Bill 24 is put to a final vote." I don't think that that's unreasonable. I know that one of my other colleagues has also read into the record that another doctor that he talked to was very concerned about this as well.

This letter talks about an objective of this bill, which is to permanently recognize in legislation the Alberta Medical Association as the sole representative of ALL Alberta Physicians in negotiations with the Government of Alberta.

All legislation regarding the status of physicians (Medicare act, Canada health act etc.) has always considered physicians as independent contractors. This is a fundamental principle.

Madam Chair, what's interesting is that in one fell swoop a six-page bill is going to take and completely change the dynamics of the relationship between the government, the AMA, and its physicians. I think that even though it's just a six-page bill, the fact of what it's doing has got to have us have a second sober thought on this.

Again, Dr. Huang also says the same thing.

This is why medical associations are and have been allowed by physicians, with their consent, to from time to time negotiate with governments and then the agreements are then voted on. This is an arrangement that has worked for decades.

Is this process broken? That's maybe the first question that we should have asked ourselves. Is this process broken? If it is broken, bring forth the evidence that shows that it was broken and had to be fixed. We have not heard one shred of evidence from this government or from the crafters of this bill that have said that this process was broken. In fact, we have heard evidence, lots of evidence, to show that this process had been working for decades.

He goes on to say: “why the need for change and why the rush.” We’ve been saying that now for a few weeks, Madam Chair. Why the need, and why the rush? What impending doom needs to be addressed, and how is this government trying to fix that impending doom?

Now, he says:

Membership in the AMA and all medical associations is and has always been voluntary. While membership in the AMA remains voluntary [under this bill], making the AMA the sole legal representative in negotiations effectively removes this choice. The reason is that one must be a member in the AMA if it is legally recognized as the sole financial representative.

Otherwise, that physician has no say in financial matters.

3:40

The majority of the doctors are their own business, and that collective of businesses are members of the AMA. The problem is that the AMA, if they have the sole right to be the collective bargaining unit for all physicians – even if a physician is not a member of the AMA, they have to take what that AMA collective bargaining unit struck in terms of financial remuneration. The problem is that this, as we’ve said before, is a problem for rural Alberta doctors, for remote area doctors. Once again, why don’t we get those physicians to come forward to be able to present to us as a House their concerns and what we can do to mitigate those concerns?

He says that it’s important to remember that

AMA negotiates for many physicians but not all.

For example, laboratory physicians and physicians on salary (eg. those in Alternate relationship plans and Hospitalists) all negotiate salaries separately from the AMA.

It is also distressing that Bill 24 and the significant change it represents is NOT about patient care. No part of this bill is about or aims to improve patient care.

I brought that up in my first speech to this House about this bill, talking about the fact that this is about unionizing another sector in this province, and it was done in a shady fashion.

In fact, when you go and take a look at the numbers, they originally said that 89 per cent of AMA members were in favour of this. The truth is that 89 per cent of the 30 per cent that actually took part in this were in favour of it. Thirty per cent of the full gamut of doctors and physicians in this province is not a strong sample size. We’re in a situation now where they have to question: why was this not brought forward? Why was this bill not brought forward? To make things worse, Madam Chair, that 30 per cent that actually voted were not voting on this bill; they were voting on zeroes. They were voting on the ability for them to be able to get a raise or to increase their fees or not. That’s what they were voting on. This doctor, this physician, corroborates that assertion that we made earlier.

The debate at the AMA on this agreement was focused on the financials and some at the RF did object to the idea of legislative representation.

It must also be recognized that clause 1(h)b speaks of the need for “further input from others will be required”.

In this situation the recommendation was that further consultation was required. Yet once again, “What’s the rush?” he says. It’s a valid question, Madam Chair.

He goes on to say,

Such input on Bill 24 has not been requested of physicians by the AMA nor did they vote on Bill 24. It is also concerning that the representative forum was not asked about this legislation at its Spring 2018 meeting, held September 21-22, 2018.

It is unacceptable this was not discussed and voted on at a representative forum especially as the RF is the governing body

of the Alberta Medical Association and thus the AMA cannot claim the physicians of Alberta support Bill 24.

How can you get any clearer than that, Madam Chair? I’m going to read that again because I think it’s important for this government that believes so much that they are consulting with Albertans and with the members of this society, that here is a classic example. This man was there. He saw it. He says that there was no consultation at all, and they did not discuss it. I’ll read it again just so that it’s in the record here.

It is unacceptable this was not discussed and voted on at a representative forum especially as the RF is the governing body of the Alberta Medical Association and thus the AMA cannot claim the physicians of Alberta support Bill 24.

Now, from what we’ve seen, Madam Chair, is that there seems to be an internal conflict within the AMA as to whether or not physicians are interested in having AMA become the collective bargaining unit for all AMA members and all physicians. Wouldn’t it be prudent for us as politicians to step away from this, to say: “You guys, work it out first, and then come to us with what your recommendations are. Then we can create legislation based upon what your recommendations are”? How arrogant of this government to think that they have the ability to decide what is good for doctors and physicians.

We have a doctor on that side. I have not heard the doctor from that side of the House speak once for or against this bill. It would be, I believe, incumbent on that member to stand up and be able to state at least his position, albeit as a backbencher, on this bill, to provide us with the ability to know, as a person that’s in the trenches, that has seen what happens with physicians, what he thinks should happen. If he says, “You know what; I actually see a lot of value to this,” fantastic. He is a physician. I think that his opinion should be weighted that way.

But it’s pure arrogance on our side, on the side of politicians, to believe that we know what’s going on in the trenches. It is evident, Madam Chair, that they have an internal conflict going on about this issue of whether or not the AMA should have the exclusive rights, because that’s what we’re talking about, to be able to negotiate in collective bargaining for remuneration for physicians. If they are in conflict now, how do you think they’re going to be after this is rammed down their throats? I don’t think they’re going to be happy at all.

I don’t understand why this government is continuing to reject our proposal to take this back to committee so that we can hear from physicians in committee on whether they are for or against this, but I have to say that I imagine the reason is as clear as can be. They have zero interest in receiving that consultation. They have zero interest in knowing what Alberta physicians feel about this bill, and because they have zero interest in knowing what they care about this bill, they refuse to even address it in this House. I’ve asked this question now – this is now in Committee of the Whole. We’ve gone through first and second readings, and I’ve had absolutely no feedback from this government as to whether or not this was a robust and proper consultation and if the doctors and physicians are onboard. Because of that, this is the most egregious approach that I can think of.

Madam Chair, I hope that this government and this whole Assembly will take sober second thought and be willing, even in this Committee of the Whole, to stand up, and I invite the hon. doctor on the government side to stand up and give us his opinion on this, to give us what he, in the trenches, would say is the best approach for this. I’d love to be able to hear from him, and I think that this is definitely the venue to be able to do that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. As my colleague before me had spoken to, it is a rather short bill, six pages long, but those six pages have very large consequences, I believe, and need to have the due diligence necessary to ensure that we are able to move forward with a health system that is robust and sustainable and also that the health system is able to attract the physicians necessary to continue on with the health system and to serve Albertans properly.

3:50

What concerns me is how rapidly this is moving forward and, I believe, without the full consultation and the transparency necessary to ensure that we in this House can make a decision based on the input from all of the stakeholders involved, all of the people, the doctors especially, the ones that will be impacted by this going forward. But it does have impacts on all Albertans, going forward, in ensuring that we have quality health care.

Probably the concern that has come forward the most is the concern with regard to the consultation and the process by which the doctors within the AMA were able to actually have their say and have their discussion. We're hearing from doctors that were completely unaware of this process moving forward. Sure, we see that the minister is stating that 89 per cent of doctors voted in favour of this, but it was 89 per cent of the doctors that were present at the vote that voted for this. Only 30 per cent of the doctors participated. It does give me a certain amount of cause for concern when we start to hear from those that were not fully informed of the process and were not being made aware or that feel that they're not fully aware of the changes that are being proposed at this time.

Bill 24 essentially gives the AMA, the Alberta Medical Association, the powers to be the negotiating body, similar to a union but not actually a union, for all physicians in the province of Alberta. I believe that the AMA, the association, has done good work in the past and continues to do good work, but I also do have some concern with moving forward in a manner that does not allow others that would like to operate in a more independent manner the ability to do so. I have some concerns from doctors that have approached me with questions about whether or not this is going to impact their ability to operate as independent contractors and ensure that they can continue their small-business practice the way they have in the past and if that will continue on in a manner that they feel actually protects their small business and the rights to operate within the province of Alberta.

Another concern when I look at the process that we've had here: I look at the deal that came out of this. We hear that the minister is talking about saving \$98 million in health costs by a fee freeze, that the AMA had agreed to a fee freeze. Giving consideration to a fee freeze at the same time as we look at the — one side gets what they want and the other side gets what they want in a negotiation. I am concerned that the AMA as an association, not being necessarily the voice for all physicians in this province — now we are moving in a direction that gives them full, exclusive rights to negotiate. We lose some of our ability to negotiate independently with the groups, which could be detrimental. Possibly some of the physicians would see that as detrimental to their future, and possibly we could look at that as that it might be detrimental to the ability for the government to negotiate with the physicians going forward. The government, of course, is representing all Albertans. We need to have the

confidence that the government is able to do that in a way that is going to protect the future of all Albertans going forward.

One thing that we have with all legislation is that, of course, there's regulation that comes out of that. We don't have a lot of information here from the minister with regard to the regulations that are being developed out of this legislation. I think it's important, you know, whether we're in the committee process or whether we're in this process, that we ensure that all questions are being answered, that Albertans can feel confident that this is a very transparent approach to governance, that there's a certain level of accountability as the government moves forward with this legislation, and that Albertans can be confident that this is in their best interests.

With that, Madam Chair, I'd just like to highlight that I do have concerns that we're moving forward in a manner that does not actually hear from all physicians properly, I believe, that we are not able to hear the concerns from some of the physicians that have approached our caucus. I do believe that we have a responsibility to have that transparency so that Albertans can be confident that this is legislation that is in their best interests.

I believe that this agreement that has come upon us between the AMA and the government, where now we give the AMA exclusive rights to negotiations in this province, should be enough of a warning bell, a warning signal that would say to Albertans: what did the AMA get out of this? They have agreed to a fee freeze. In that negotiation I think Albertans are probably asking the question: is it in the best interests of Albertans going forward, of doctors going forward, of physicians going forward that the AMA is essentially given these exclusive rights, almost in the position of a superunion, within the province of Alberta?

With that, Madam Chair, I believe I will continue to ask questions and to seek guidance and to ask the government to take a pause and look towards proper consultation on this bill to allow Albertans to be fully informed before we take the step of moving this legislation forward into third reading.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 24?

Seeing none, I will put the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 24 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 22 An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments or questions to be offered? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. If my information is correct, I believe we are on the amendment moved by my colleague from Calgary-South East on my behalf when this was adjourned. Perhaps I'll just confirm with you that that's, in fact, what we're on.

The Deputy Chair: That is correct.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I thought so.

First off, I just want to say a word of thanks to my colleague from Calgary-South East for moving that amendment on my behalf. I think what's been, I will say without much hesitation, the most rewarding process that I've been a part of as part of the 29th Legislative Assembly has been the work that we have done together as part of the child intervention panel. What was so compelling about that work was the challenging subject matter that we tackled together in a crosspartisan way. Being an all-party committee, we had the opportunity to really dig deep into what is a very complex and a very challenging issue that has been a topic that has been investigated in numerous committees, reports by the Child and Youth Advocate, previous panels and committees of the members of the Assembly. Many ministers have tried to tackle improving the lives of kids in care, in particular indigenous children in care.

4:00

I think it's important that we remember why we started this process in the first place, which is the case of Serenity, who died very, very tragically, having been in care. We should never forget what the circumstances were that led her to be in that very terrible situation. None of the changes in this bill will be able to undo that terrible, terrible tragedy, and we should never ever forget that. What we need to do is focus on what we can do to make sure that nothing like that ever happens again. I'm confident that the changes that this bill brings should give us more opportunity to say that we took this challenging issue forward. We should be in a position where, I think, this does improve the lives of kids in care and does improve the likelihood that fewer numbers of children will come into contact with the child intervention system and, in particular, creates a pathway for indigenous children to get better care, to stay connected with culture, with community, and with family.

Back to the process, and that's the substance of the amendment that I've moved. This bill, like many, will be reviewed every five years, but in so doing, I thought it was important that we put some parameters around what that review is. If it's simply a matter of sending it to a committee of the Assembly, while that can be effective, this subject matter has some very specific requirements in terms of overview. Five years from now I would hope that we'll have the opportunity to say that we have made substantive progress, that we've reduced the terrible overrepresentation that we see of indigenous kids in care: 69 per cent of kids in care are indigenous. Only roughly 5 to 10 per cent of kids in the province of Alberta are indigenous, so there's that vast overrepresentation.

That's why I've moved this amendment, which will create a review committee composed of

- (a) one or more persons [who are] representative of
 - (i) Indigenous communities,
 - (ii) guardians and caregivers of children, and
 - (iii) providers of services to children and families, and
- (b) one or more members of each caucus represented in the Legislative Assembly.

That, I hope, creates and carries on the same spirit of crosspartisan work focused on outcomes.

I want to say thank you to the minister. You'll recall that at the outset of this process, almost exactly two years ago, the government was not interested in creating an all-party panel. They also had very, very tight constraints on what the panel was to review. Working together with other opposition parties, we were able to convince the government that we needed to broaden that review. We needed to travel the province, visit indigenous communities where they live, and hear their stories first-hand. We did that, and there are a number of members in the Assembly, yourself included, Madam Chair, who participated in that process. I think we should be proud of the work that we have done there.

Now, that isn't to say that we mustn't remain vigilant, that we can wash our hands of it and just hope that this bill solves all the problems, because it doesn't. The challenges and the paths that lead children into care are ones that come from many, many decades, centuries of a colonial legacy, that we will take a very long time, sadly, to overcome. We need to acknowledge where that comes from and understand how it is that we got to the place that we are. But I believe that this bill takes steps forward that will help address some of the current issues that are making it more challenging for kids in care, in particular indigenous kids in care, and then I hope that this amendment – and I will thank the government, in particular the Minister of Children's Services, for working together with us in crafting this amendment, something that I hope the government can accept. I would hope all members of this Legislature, opposition and government, would be willing to get on board with this and ensure that the good work that we have done carries on and that every five years we come back and go through another thoughtful and thorough process.

I will just end by encouraging the government and all members who are here in the Assembly, opposition and government, to really look at this process and ask yourselves if the outcomes that we see here, which I think are good outcomes, are the kind of thing we'd like to see on other issues as well. I would suggest it absolutely is. If I was to compare it to the first all-party panel I was a part of, the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, that process sure seemed pretty tilted from the very beginning. The government, on that one, had a pretty good idea what outcome they wanted. They needed to create a committee to make it look like they consulted when in fact from the very beginning they knew exactly what they wanted to do, and it was not a great process.

This process on the other hand was very open ended. The government asked very general questions. I think all members of the committee came together and focused on doing the right thing for kids in care, and we had some challenging conversations. We didn't always agree on everything, but we worked together as a team, and we worked through those things. We engaged with people with lived experience. We engaged with indigenous communities, with service providers, with foster parents, with birth parents, and I think the results were positive. That's the substance of my amendment, to ensure that that good work happens again every time this legislation is reviewed. I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on the amendment to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. I appreciate the intent of what the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow has brought forward here with his amendment. There are certainly things there that I agree with. A regular review of the legislation is good housekeeping for all bills, but I think this one in particular could use an assurance that the bill will be reviewed on a regular basis because the fact is that the issues with children in care have been a problem. As I understand it, every province and every state of the U.S. has had ongoing issues, which I suppose means that it's a complex problem.

In that spirit we need to make the legislation as good as we can. I wouldn't say that I agree with the mover of the amendment's assertion that what's in this bill will help prevent a reoccurrence of what happened to Serenity. In fact, I would say there's a place where it's fallen woefully short, and I would just call that an honest

disagreement between myself and the hon. member on whether it's effective that way.

Madam Chair, I have a subamendment which I would like to bring forward with your permission.

The Deputy Chair: You can just have the original come to the table, please, Member. Once I have that you can go ahead. Hon. member, please go ahead.

4:10

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. For those that haven't received the hard copy yet, the subamendment says to move that amendment A2 to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, be amended in the proposed section 131.2(3)(a) by striking out "and" at the end of subclause (ii), by adding "and" at the end of subclause (iii), and by adding the following after subclause (iii):

(iv) the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

For those of us that were on the committee, I'm happy to hear what any hon. members have to say, because where I do agree with the mover of the amendment is that we all did our best to act in a nonpartisan way, because it's that important, because we need to look after children. We certainly heard a lot of testimony and received a lot of information from a lot of people across the province, some stakeholders, some adults that had been in the system as they grew up, certainly from a lot of indigenous people, who are severely overrepresented in the system. I'm sure all of it was honest, I'm sure all of it was true, I'm sure all of it was heartfelt, but not all of the information we received agreed with one another, and that's probably because different people in some cases had different experiences in the system or with the system or even their viewpoint from outside of the system.

But the fact is that one thing that I found consistent is that a trusted voice was the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which is why this subamendment would include the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Now, boy, there's an office, in my view, that has one of the toughest jobs in the government of Alberta, in the province of Alberta, dealing with the worst circumstances that occur to, you know, in many cases, the most vulnerable children amongst us. Reporting in an accurate, strong, and I would even say a compassionate and loving way on behalf of the children who are either injured and sometimes die in the system, that have bad experiences, those files end up in the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, who, I'm sure, does the severely unpleasant job of deep dives on the files, investigations, looking into evidence on behalf of the child, looking at what might have caused, or what did cause in many cases, the children in the system to suffer or die or any combination of bad circumstances that end up on the advocate's desk.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

To really, in my view, bring focus to it, bring focus in a way that not just people in this committee but, I think, anybody who hasn't done it and those maybe watching at home on TV, if you go on the website of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and read some of their reports, any of the reports, really, that that office has published, you will find that the work is professional. It's thorough. Again, it's compassionate and loving towards these kids. The more we can involve the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, in my opinion, when we are dealing with children in care, the better chance that we have of (a) getting better outcomes for kids that have contact with the system, and (b) I think the more we involve the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the better chance we'll have to make ongoing, substantive, and important improvements to

the system and the better chance we'll have of learning not only from mistakes made and problems that occur but, actually, perhaps even learning from the things that we do right and the interventions that help kids along the way.

Our chances of understanding the nuances in this obviously complicated file – you know, you might say: so what's so complicated about looking after kids? Well, I guess anybody that's a parent would probably think that it's fairly complicated.

This is nonpartisan, Madam Chair. When a Conservative government was in government here, we had problems in the system with children in care, and with the current government we've had problems with children in care. Again, this not a partisan issue, in my view. It's bigger and more important than partisan bickering because it looks after kids that are actually in the care of the 87 of us that are elected to sit in this Chamber. In my view, all bear a personal responsibility for the welfare and the safety and the nurturing of every single child that touches that system.

Madam Chair, I know you were on the committee with me and you did yeoman's work there and even tried to direct us cats, as you're doing now, because lots of times things were orderly, but there were times when people felt strongly about how to change the system and how to try to make things better, more safe for kids in care.

I hope that Members of the Legislative Assembly . . .

The Chair: Hon. member. Hon. member.

An Hon. Member: I'm sorry.

The Chair: I appreciate that, yeah. We are in committee, but it's still not appropriate to go around the front there. Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

Members of the House, I hope that you will consider the value of this subamendment. I hope that even the mover of the amendment might see that this will be an improvement to what I think is a well-intentioned amendment that he put on the floor. I hope that you will join with me in supporting this because this really is just about making the legislation as good as it can be while we're in this House today and making it as good as it can be for the very good reason of protecting Alberta's children that we are responsible for because they are in the child care system.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I echo some of the sentiments that have come from the Member for Calgary-Hays. I'm very optimistic of this process, that we can continue to have this as a nonpartisan approach. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow as well for his words earlier about talking about the process and the intent of the government members during this process. Thank you very much. I sincerely believe the same from the members of the other side of the aisle here.

The way the current amendment proposed by the Member for Calgary-Elbow stands, I do support. However, I have some challenges supporting the subamendment, and I'll explain why. The first process is that we haven't consulted with the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Before having that discussion with him, I'd be apprehensive of actually bringing forth this subamendment without discussing about opening up that scope in his office. In the previous legislation that we brought forth last spring, we've actually opened up the scope of what the Child and Youth Advocate's office can do. Now their office is responsible for reviewing every death that occurs, and they have a substantive

amount of extra powers that will allow them to do that review process.

The other concern I have, too – and this is something that came up – is that when we were reviewing the existing legislation in the ministerial panel, we were also responsible for reviewing the review process itself. If you remember, Madam Chair, that was part of our phase 1 approach. One of the things that we determined in that approach – and legislation has changed – is that there was a need for changes within the advocate's office: the way reviews were done, which reviews should be completed, and what's within their scope.

With that being said, I would have some concern – and, you know, by no means am I alleging or making an assumption of any malice. One of the things that was a very positive approach was having those fresh eyes and outside approaches looking into the review process and determining what was working and what wasn't working and bringing in experts and people from across the country, including the advocate's office, to discuss with us. You could have the allegations coming forth that there could be a perceived conflict of interest if the advocate is reviewing his own processes and the way his office operates, so I can't support the subamendment.

I do want to thank the member for bringing this forward and taking an open-minded approach to this bill.

4:20

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you. Thank you, first of all, to the Member for Calgary-Hays for bringing forward this important subamendment. I think he did a great job of pointing out why adding the Child and Youth Advocate to the process makes sense.

I served on the ministerial panel with the Member for Calgary-Hays as well as several members of this Chamber, including yourself, of course, Madam Chair. One of the things that really struck me during the process and after the process was how much the lack of accountability for the government of the day as well as a lack of accountability for the ministry were the biggest part of the problem that we were attempting to fix. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays says, this is really a nonpartisan problem. It's happening in other jurisdictions, certainly, not just in Canada but around the world. It's happened to the government that he had the privilege of being a minister of, and it's certainly happened to this government.

When the case of Serenity came to light, the hope of this Chamber – I think I can speak on behalf of everybody here – was that if there was this ministerial panel, we would be able to address some of the issues in particular with the case of Serenity. I think we all went into it skeptical on the opposition side – skeptical – given our experience with the NDP government on other issues. But we went into it with good faith. In fact, we compromised and agreed to essentially slow down the discussion about Serenity in this Chamber and then go in a bipartisan way and have a path. We thought, as you know, Madam Chair, that it should have been a committee, an official committee that was responsible to this Legislature. It should have been a committee that could have called witnesses, that was on *Hansard* and was on the record. But we decided in the interests of Serenity's family and in the interests of trying to make sure a tragedy like that did not take place again in this province that we would compromise and we would go through the ministerial panel process.

At the time, though, lots of media spoke out as well as us about the concern that this would just be put back under the carpet again

and nobody would really go into the actual details that were sent there. Unfortunately, time has now shown that that is what happened. The NDP used the panel to tone down where it was politically in the province, the frustration of Albertans about this tragic and horrible story, to kind of ride that out, to come into this place and say: we're working on this issue. In fact, ministers would rise and say: "We are reviewing parts of the Serenity case on the panel. We don't know what the hon. members are referring to."

Then we'd go to a panel meeting right after the question period or right before the question period where those questions were asked, and the NDP majority on that panel would block us from asking specific questions about the Serenity case over and over, which then prompted Paula Simons, now Senator Simons, to say in one of her articles near the end of this situation – this is not a quote from the opposition. This is not a quote from a columnist who – I don't think Paula would be upset if I said that she was not an overly conservative columnist. In fact, I think she would agree with me, I suspect. I've had the privilege of having meetings with Paula in the past when we've talked about this issue over coffee and sharing some of her knowledge on this file. She says: "They've never reviewed Serenity's case – which they only learned about [the following] fall. Now, in light of the all-party panel, they [will] put off [that] review indefinitely."

One of my great regrets of this last term was that in hindsight and, I think, with good intention the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, who was the leader of the third party at that time, and our leadership in the Official Opposition, the Wildrose Party at that time – I know that our heart was in the right spot. We wanted to try to work with the government to get something that could solve this issue once and for all. We were worried – and sadly it's now been shown – that the NDP was going to put that under the carpet and avoid dealing with the issue.

I think what the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is trying to do with this amendment is to address that issue, to make sure that governments of the day, not just this government but future governments, including ourselves if we're given the privilege of forming government after the next election, can't do the same types of things that the NDP did with that ministerial panel. They cannot, you know, just sweep these issues underneath the carpet. The most logical person to participate in that process, I think, is the Child and Youth Advocate. I think that's the hon. member's intention with this amendment.

You know, one of the things that the panel wanted, particularly the opposition and the experts that were on the panel – I suspect that some of the NDP members who were on the panel also wanted it, but unfortunately because of political circumstances within their own party I would assume that they weren't able to support it – was actually to have a committee that the Child and Youth Advocate would answer to in a public way about this, that could be similar to our Public Accounts Committee, that all of us in this room are familiar with, where the Auditor General works with the Public Accounts Committee, which is also chaired by the opposition and is able to present reports, to call upon government departments to answer questions about stuff that's been, you know, brought to light, to help hold the government accountable, and to be a resource in some ways to the Auditor General and to work with the Auditor General.

We wanted to see that same process for the Child and Youth Advocate because what we recognized – I'm sure the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays will agree with this – is that ultimately, as we dug into this, nobody was responsible. Nobody wanted to take the responsibility. I don't blame them. I wouldn't want to be responsible for some of these horrific things. Nobody, when you followed the process, was ultimately responsible. You know, of

course, we weren't allowed to get into too many of the details of how the steps along the process – that was continually blocked by the NDP as well. What was clear was that nobody was accountable for it and also that nobody was being a true watchdog of the system itself. Instead, we continued to rely on the system that had failed people like Serenity, on the very department that had failed people like Serenity instead of being able to put in place systems that will be able to make it fixed.

It seems to me that it's disappointing that the NDP worked so hard to block the Child and Youth Advocate from having that resource and the ability to do that. This is not a partisan individual. Nobody would claim, certainly, that the current Child and Youth Advocate has been operating in a partisan way. He's been very, very focused on children, which is his mandate. Having him have an ability where we could publicly talk about these things in a transparent way is definitely what the panel wanted, the majority when you include the experts. Certainly, the government members on there, in the end, did not agree with that, but I think it's what Albertans would have wanted. Unfortunately, as we know, the NDP did not do that.

Now we have a situation where the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has brought forward a very reasonable amendment to at least attempt to try to do something similar, to make sure that the watchdog for children, you know, an officer of this Legislature, whose ultimate responsibility is this issue, could participate in the process. I would submit to you, Madam Chair, given the comments from the backbench member of the government on this amendment, that it appears the NDP is going to continue that practice of not wanting this process to be transparent and accountable.

Unfortunately, Madam Chair, what that means is that this is going to continue. That is without a doubt what members of the panel learned. People go through these processes with good intentions. They really do. I think all members did. I mean, that was a hard job, and you were the chair of that committee. It wasn't easy to be able to go through that. Some of the stuff was pretty tough, that we all heard. But we go through these processes, and then because nobody will put in the systems to make sure the system is held accountable for it, nobody will put in a process to make sure that the system meets those goals that were established by those panels.

As you know, Madam Chair, we weren't the first panel to try to address this. In fact, there are bookshelves and bookshelves of content on things that could be done to fix the situation that unfortunately have not been implemented. That's another thing the panel – that was clear. I don't think any member who participated in that panel would argue about that, that there are other people that have talked about that. There are lots of similarities. My late friend, the former minister Manmeet Bhullar, had a ministerial – it was a little different but the same thing – round-table. When you read through some of the stuff that they learned in that process or some of the recommendations they had, quite frankly, it was very similar to some of the stuff, I think, the conclusions that we all came to. There were a lot of similarities. You know, then the question for me became: well, why didn't we implement those when those people did that fine work?

4:30

I think that at the end of the day it came down to: there's no process to hold people accountable. Let's be clear. While I respect and thank the people that work in the ministry on what has to be one of the hardest topics and hardest situations that anybody would have to work in – and when you talk to some of those individuals that are working very, very hard, I couldn't imagine having to do that for a living. It's really, really hard. You're dealing with tragic

circumstances all the time and not enough money ever, no matter what you do, and not enough time in a day. You know, that's not easy. We're not blaming them for that. But, at the end of the day, the very system that failed Serenity and others is still in charge of the process. We're still in the same spot that we were when Minister Bhullar and others did this and when others before them did this.

Now with this amendment at least we get a chance of having an outside, nonpartisan officer who answers to this place, ultimately is responsible to this place, to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, as you know, Madam Chair, who could then be at least one of the people on there holding the system to account and being a watchdog and also then coming out to the news. When governments of the day, like this government, decide to sweep things under the rug and come into this place and pretend like they're dealing with things in a panel when they're not – I mean, that's easy to determine – that Child and Youth Advocate then is in a position to go: wait a minute; wait a minute; this is wrong.

With our panel, we at least had opposition members that were able to participate that did that. We had to come out and say: no; when the NDP say that they're doing this, that's not quite the way we see it; this is actually what's taking place. We were able to then get the word out to Albertans about the behaviour of the NDP on that panel. But now, when we go into this process, we need to make sure that there's somebody that will continue to do that.

With that said, I strongly encourage all members to support this. I don't know why you would not want the Child and Youth Advocate to participate in this process. Quite frankly, I think that by not doing that, you show that the intention of the NDP government is to continue to hide things and not bring them into the light to be able to make sure that we fix them so that people don't end up in the same situation as Serenity and others, who, I will remind you, Madam Chair, as I close, lost their lives in the care of our system. That is a pretty serious thing that we want to make sure is avoided, and having the Child and Youth Advocate here to hold the government accountable is completely appropriate.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I just want to respond to a few of the comments. I talked in my initial remarks about this process, how it was a crosspartisan process. I want to be careful because I don't want to get too deep and sort of push back too hard, but I do take issue with a number of the things that the member said about a lack of accountability or a lack of action or a lack of oversight, that the system is the same as it always was. It feels like – no. I'm going to try to keep this high level.

Look, this morning we had Public Accounts with the Ministry of Children's Services, and we talked about their action plan. Coming out of the child intervention panel, there was a detailed action plan, some 39 actions that were to be completed by 2022. That's on the website. You can look at them in the child intervention action plan. There are 16 immediate actions to be completed by April 2019. Now, there's a website that lays out what those 16 actions are. Part of one of those actions is to pass Bill 22. What I asked the ministry officials there was if they could perhaps provide us with some more details on that website about the progress on each one of those 16 areas. It's not correct to say that the system hasn't changed. It is not perfect and, frankly, never will be, but action has been taken.

Bill 18, which we passed last spring, gives the Child and Youth Advocate, specifically to your subamendment, hon. member, the mandate to review every single child death. One of the things, as I talked with the minister and her officials about this amendment that we see before us now – in fact, my original draft of my amendment A2 had the office of the Child and Youth Advocate included in

there. One of the reasons why the minister suggested that that perhaps should be taken out – and I agreed – was that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate is always doing the work of ensuring that children in care are treated appropriately. If there is ever a death, as tragic as it is, the Child and Youth Advocate will do a report on that death, and his office issues reports on a regular basis.

The mandate is bigger than it was previous to Bill 18, and that review is for not just children up to age 18 but up to age 21, because one of the things that we heard in the panel was that once children age out of care, they sort of fall off the radar. You know, if a child ages out of care and dies from suicide or from some other reason a day after their 18th birthday, it's important for us to understand as a community how that happened. So the Child and Youth Advocate continues to do that work.

To the Member for Calgary-Shaw's point, I think there is some legitimacy. Part of the panel's work at the outset was to review the role of the Child and Youth Advocate, and I think that in five years' time, when this bill is reviewed again, I would hope that that panel does also look at the work of the Child and Youth Advocate with the benefit of five more years of time and looking at the reports that that office has done. Certainly, if I find myself in this Assembly five years from now, hopefully on the government side, I can assure you that I will personally make sure that the review panel would make sure that the Child and Youth Advocate is presented to that panel, likely more than once. I can imagine there would be an entire stream of work related to presentations by the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, as there was for the child intervention panel. The OCYA, Mr. Graff and his team, came to visit that panel on multiple occasions.

I'm comfortable in saying that the work of the Child and Youth Advocate and the input of that office as well as a review of the appropriate role for that office would be considered in this panel, going forward, based on the amendment that we have before us, so I see no reason to add the OCYA to the panel as the subamendment suggests.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate this opportunity. Now, I'm a little incredulous at what I've heard from the previous speaker and the Member for Calgary-Shaw. I think it was suggested – I don't have the Blues here, so I may not get the words exactly right – that you don't want him checking his own work. Well, this isn't about checking his own work. This is actually about: who's reviewing the legislation every five years?

I think the Member for Calgary-Elbow is correct in having somebody representing indigenous communities, somebody representing guardians and caregivers of children, and somebody representing providers of services to children and families. But, as we've heard the Member for Calgary-Shaw and the Member for Calgary-Elbow speaking, they're saying that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate has been given more authority. Because they're so trusted, they've been given more work. They're probably if not the foremost experts amongst the foremost experts on what needs to change in the legislation and what doesn't need to change in the legislation. So why would you not include the most knowledgeable, trusted party to give you advice about the legislation? I mean, why wouldn't you?

Let's face it: the office provides crucial oversights. They're mandated to work with vulnerable young people, and some are the most knowledgeable people in our province on how the legislation is being implemented on the front lines. They have their hands

either on the legislation or on the results of the legislation every day for the five years, so who better to give whatever government of the day is in place advice on how to change it or upgrade it? Or indeed they might advise to leave the legislation alone if we get to a place where things are working a lot better. You know, since the change in the legislation could easily change the roles and responsibilities of the Child and Youth Advocate, they should be heard because they play such an important role.

You know what, Madam Chair? At some point in the future they might say that they should have an even bigger role, or it's possible that they could say: well, actually, we need a smaller role. Either way, their voice is so important. It's so important. The Child and Youth Advocate is, right in its name, by definition, an advocate. Well, they represent the voices of vulnerable children, and those voices are crucial. So they advocate for children.

4:40

Now, we all need to be advocates for children. We all ought to be. Surely, representatives of the indigenous communities, when they're looking at the legislation, will be advocates for children, and the guardians and caregivers ought to be and, I'm sure, will be advocates for children, and the providers of the services that work in the field should be advocates for children when the legislation is being reviewed. But why not have the advocate, the person most responsible, the party most qualified, the party that's seen and reported on and had to sign their name to reports, to the good, the bad, and the ugly?

Who would be better qualified to look at the legislation and say, for example, that the access to information needs to change, that they couldn't get to the bottom of these files because they didn't have access to information. They might also say that the privacy of children was compromised unreasonably because the access to information needs to change a little bit differently in another section. Who can see all this stuff in such a way that they could actually know and report on how the legislation should be made bigger, smaller, or remain the same than the party that looks after the aftermath of the worst cases?

This whole thing started with Serenity. And thank you to the minister . . .

Mr. Nixon: Senator.

Mr. McIver: Senator. Pardon me.

. . . to the Senator who wrote about this and brought this all to our attention, Paula Simons. And thank you to Minister LaBoucane-Benson, who was on the committee as an independent member.

Mr. Nixon: Senator.

Mr. McIver: Senator. Again, sorry. I'm grateful for my colleague correcting me because I'm wrong each time.

The Senators were there, but also thank you to the other members of the committee. Surely, you remember that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate was seen as a force for good, as an advocate for children, as someone that could recommend the actual individual changes, the on-the-ground changes on how children in care are handled: the on-the-ground changes, the legal changes, the privacy changes, the need for cultural recognition changes.

I'll tell you what. If we're going to make legislation – and maybe that's part of the problem with the legislation in front of us. Even though it's well intentioned, it's lacking in some ways. I guess that since the government itself said that it's part 1 of 3, they admit it's lacking, so I'll let them off the hook for that. They said themselves, when they said that it's part 1 of 3, that they've got a lot more legislation to go.

Now, I'm wondering whether the office of the Child and Youth Advocate advised on this piece of legislation. I hope so. Perhaps the minister or somebody from the government side will stand up and let us know. If they didn't, then the ball was dropped. If the Child and Youth Advocate isn't involved in the legislation five years from now, in the updating of it, then the ball will be dropped again.

That's why the amendment is here, to make the legislation better, to make the process better, to make the review five years from now better, and then five years after that to make it better again. We can't quit on making things better for kids who are in our care, who are under our responsibility. We have taken on the burden of their care and survival, allowing them to be the best, most independent adults that they can possibly be after they get through with the system.

Honestly, if we're not including the office of the Child and Youth Advocate both this time and the next time we look at the legislation, then we haven't done our job right, which is why I hope all members of the House will vote for this subamendment.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment A2-SA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:45 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	McIver	Starke
Barnes	Nixon	van Dijken
Ellis	Schneider	Yao

5:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Phillips
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Renaud
Carlier	Jansen	Rosendahl
Clark	Kazim	Sabir
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Turner
Eggen	McKittrick	Westhead
Feehan	Miller	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 38
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[Motion on subamendment A2-SA1 lost]

The Chair: We are now on amendment A2.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Pursuant to Government Motion 36 I am just notifying the House that there will be no evening sitting this evening and that when we do adjourn, we will recommence at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The Chair: Are there any further comments on amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the never-ending attempt to make the legislation that comes out of this place better, I have a subamendment to be considered.

The Chair: This will be known as subamendment A2-SA2. Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate this. Subamendment A2-SA2 says to move that Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, be amended in the proposed section 131.2 by adding the following after (7), which I guess would be:

(8) The proceedings of the review committee must be conducted in public.

You know what? If there's anything that we learned along the way it is that if you want to deal with this subject of children in care, the discussion needs to stand up to public scrutiny so that that guarantees that it's in the interests of children in care. It needs to be on the record because, frankly, there are too many kids depending upon it to allow things to get swept under the carpet.

I know, again, when we had this last committee, what I learned is that the opposition lobbied very hard for a committee of the Legislature because it would be on the record with *Hansard* and conducted in public and have some rules and any particular minister would not be able to bury all or part of the proceedings. We didn't get that. Finally, after a great deal of the opposition standing together and, frankly, embarrassing the government into it, we did get a ministerial panel for which I am grateful despite the fact that we had to fight so hard for what should have been easy. I think it was the Premier that finally relented one day in question period and finally said: we'll do something. Thank you, Premier, for that. Thank you to the minister for that. It wasn't what we really wanted, but it was surely better than nothing, and again I was grateful for the way that members from all sides tried to and I think almost a hundred per cent did work in a nonpartisan way, which is a positive outcome.

Well, I think what we've learned is that in looking after children in care, if you want to make it better, sweeping the issues under the carpet doesn't make it better. I think we tried that. Surely, the previous government that I was part of tried that, and that didn't work. Since then there have been attempts to sweep some of the problems under the carpet, and that didn't work. I think that we actually need to have some of these painful conversations out loud if we're going to make the way that we look after children in care better. If you want to actually fix difficult problems, you need to face up to the difficult problems, and that requires that the proceedings happen in public. That's why this subamendment is forward. For the sake of future and present kids that are in care, I hope that all members of this Assembly will support this subamendment. I believe it's genuinely an improvement to the amendment, which is good. I think this makes it more good.

Let's face it. Following the Serenity case, Albertans justifiably have some concerns, ensuring that children in care are safe and protected. For the sake of public trust it's important that the proceedings of the committee be conducted in public and on the record. During the child intervention panel we advocated for the proceedings to be recorded in *Hansard*, and the government refused.

You know what? You could say that if there's nothing to hide – but here's the thing. If there's a problem and children die in care and they shouldn't have, there is something to hide, but unless you actually talk about it, you're not going to actually fix it. So I'm not even going to say: if there's nothing to hide. I think that when things go wrong, perhaps there is something to hide because no one wants

to take responsibility for a child that dies in care. I appreciate that some kids die in care because they just happen to get sick. Well, then there's nothing to hide there, but if somebody made a bad mistake that caused that child to get injured or die, then there is something to hide. What's most important is that it doesn't get hidden if you actually want to put procedures and legislation and policies and plans in place to prevent a reoccurrence. You should have to not hide what you want to hide, and that's why this subamendment is here, so that what we're uncomfortable with doesn't get hidden, what we're uncomfortable with gets confronted.

You know what? Five years from now I don't know whether I'll be gone, whether I'll be on this side of the House or that side of the House or any of it. It doesn't matter. The fact is that it doesn't matter who's in government; this is a nonpartisan issue. Whoever is there needs to face up to the real, serious, tough responsibilities of when you take a child out of their family home, you are responsible for them, and when things go wrong, we need to have those difficult discussions. That's why this subamendment is here, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to subamendment A2-SA2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just some clarifying questions for the hon. member. When we were on the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, we did run into some situations where individuals who had just been in the system who were in their early 20s were very nervous about appearing in front of the public and even just people who were afraid of reprisal if they came forward. I'm just trying to wrap my head around the interpretation of this. Is there an opportunity for in camera sessions, or is the intent for everything to be public?

Mr. McIver: Listen, when the discussions about the legislation are taking place, it should be in public. If there are discussions outside of that about specific cases to give context, that could surely be in camera, but the discussions about the legislation and its effects need to be in public so that people know what is changing and why.

Certainly, the hon. member is concerned about, you know, the privacy perhaps of even victims of mistakes. I share that with him, but that's not a discussion about the legislation. That's a discussion about individual cases and context. But the discussions about the legislation need to be in public, and that's what I have laid before the House here. And I'd be grateful if the hon. member and all members of this Legislature would support it.

5:10

Mr. Sucha: Okay. Well, thank you to the hon. member for that clarification. I don't see why we can't support this subamendment if that's the opportunity. If it's talking about the legislation or reforms around it, I absolutely can support this subamendment.

The Chair: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I guess I just want to ask a question, and I don't know, frankly, if the government can answer this. Of course, our friends from Parliamentary Counsel can't speak to this specifically. You know, just to what the Member for Calgary-Shaw had raised, the only question I would have about this and the concern would be: would we find ourselves five years down the road having a review committee which would be precluded from going in camera to hear very personal stories?

That was a big part of what this past child intervention panel was all about. It was not a common thing. It's not something that the panel did very often. The vast, vast majority of our proceedings were in public, but our deliberations were not. They were in camera,

and I think that's appropriate. So I guess my question would be: would this create perhaps an unintended consequence of constraining the work of the committee, preventing that committee from having very open dialogue about very sensitive matters? Would it prevent people from coming and presenting to the committee in a way that would be comfortable for them?

There are many people who perhaps have lived experience being a child in care who are now adults. Perhaps even there may be a scenario, although we didn't have this last time and I don't know if it ever would be appropriate, to actually have a child who's currently in care or had lived experience with that under the age of 18 present. As I recall, we did not have that in the child intervention panel, but we did have some now adults in their early 20s who had been children in care. I, I guess, feel that this amendment may perhaps unintentionally preclude future reviews from hearing the lived experience of people who have been in care.

I understand the intent that the review committee must be conducted in public. I'm a big, big believer in open debate. That's a big part of the reason that I'm in this Assembly. But I also acknowledge that there will be times, especially in cases like this, where we're dealing with child intervention and children in care which have some very legitimate confidentiality and privacy considerations. We need to be mindful of those.

Yes, you know, if this past process is any indication – certainly, I would hope that, based on what I'm proposing in my amendment – the intent very much is to have a very public and very open review. The wording around the “committee must submit to the Minister a report” and that “the Minister shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly” if it is sitting, and if not, “within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting of the Legislative Assembly”: so the amendment, as I've proposed it, already does have some significant transparency, I guess, requirements, and that's very much the intention.

The other, I guess, fail-safe, if you will, in my current amendment, which perhaps renders the subamendment from the Member for Calgary-Hays redundant, is that “one or more members of each caucus represented in the Legislative Assembly” would be a part of the process. I hate to predict the future – and perhaps I'm wrong about this – but if we have opposition parties that are not of the same ideological bent as the government of the day, I suspect that they're probably not going to allow for too much secrecy in the review process. If there was too much secrecy, I suspect that they would create a minority report and also kick up a fuss in the media, as well they should.

I have to say that having gone through the process we just went through, my intention with this amendment is to in the future re-create that process. Now that I've said that on *Hansard*, I hope that historians five years from now will go back and remind that committee of its terms of reference. That's very much the intention of this amendment as we put this into legislation, to replicate as close as possible the process that we've just gone through here in the child intervention panel. But that process did have some in camera sessions. My question and, I guess, a concern would be that if we do pass this subamendment, we would constrain that panel's ability to do that important work and respect confidentiality as necessary.

Thank you.

Mr. Sucha: You know, I can appreciate where the Member for Calgary-Elbow is coming from. To be honest, in kind of looking into it, my initial inkling was, you know, that we're trying to achieve a very transparent process, to review this intensely within five years' time. For the most part, this amendment, to be honest, kind of drew it out and let people know the process. But I also did

understand where the member was coming from, where I thought it was redundant.

I can appreciate where the Member for Calgary-Elbow is coming from with his concerns in relation to protecting privacy and family. Granted, depending on how black and white it is, law is always up for interpretation. I can really understand and respect where the Member for Calgary-Elbow has some serious concerns in relation to this unintentionally opening the door and making it difficult for people to come forward. It doesn't really spell out the parameters for when the committee could go in camera or when it would allow privacy for families that require or need the privacy or have requested it. It could actually be a detriment to the committee. So I thank him for bringing that up in this as well.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the subamendment?

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, I listened to the Member for Calgary-Elbow, and I've got to say that he probably should, when he gets a quiet minute, pour himself a glass of wine and listen to himself. He was talking in circles. He was talking in circles. He said in one breath that he wanted everything to be open and transparent. In the next breath he wants to vote against a motion to make it open and transparent. It can't be both.

He said in one breath that he wanted a process just like the last one, but the amendment that he put forward, that I liked, just for the record, says a "review committee." What we did was a ministerial panel, nothing at all like what he's proposing. What he's proposing is fine. What he just argued for is completely different. Based on his argument, he would vote against his own amendment. That's not what he was supporting when he was on his feet just now. He was supporting the exact same process. The exact same process wasn't good enough. It wasn't even close to being good enough.

What the hon. member put in his notice of amendment is "review committee," not at all like what we just did. I'm a little taken aback and a little gobsmacked, if you will, by what I just heard because I have no idea what the member intends now. What he wrote in black and white seems to be okay. At least, I think it would improve the legislation, and I could support it. But what he just said when he was on his feet was completely – completely – at odds with what he signed his name to on this piece of paper, the amendment.

I don't know where he stands. I hope he's going to support the subamendment that I put forward. But all I'll say for the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow is that what he committed his signature to in writing is much better than what he just said when he was on his feet five minutes ago.

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Hays for this important subamendment. I share some concerns, that he has articulated, in regard to both the comments of the private member from the NDP side of the aisle on this and even more to the comments of the House leader for the third party.

You know, to defend and try to ignore the real problems with the process takes away from being able to fix this problem. Again, I'm going to use a quote from Paula Simons which I think really articulates the problem, where we ended up at the end of this ministerial panel. To defend that that process worked a hundred per cent is, quite frankly, ridiculous. She says:

Albertans didn't elect an NDP government to prop up . . . [the] status quo. Albertans elected them to clean up the messes of their Tory predecessors – and to protect the vulnerable. With this vague and wishy-washy report, they've failed to do either.

The results that came from the panel: well, there were certainly some good recommendations. I would not say that the intention of the Member for Calgary-Elbow was in any way negative. I think he had a good intention in participating in it, as I do think every member of the panel did.

5:20

But to ignore where it ended up does a disservice to the very people that we were sent there to try to help. To ignore where the process ended up and then to try to say that that's the process we should use going forward I think is disappointing. It's also confusing, quite frankly, given his amendment that he's moved in this Chamber, that we will debate when we're finished with the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays' subamendment.

Further to that, though, I think a point worth bringing up, after listening to the Member for Calgary-Elbow's comments, is that this is about a legislative review, your amendment, about reviewing legislation. This amendment is not giving a mandate to do criminal investigations or to do those types of things where certainly confidentiality would be important. Certainly, there could be some circumstances where there would have to be an in camera process to maybe have a discussion about some sensitive things that had taken place so that the people on the legislative committee could be able to come up with ideas and understand what needed to change. But the idea that legislation could not be made in a public way, that the conversation could not be in a public way is what we reject and, quite frankly, is the problem that we have that has taken us through all the last two years or longer. As we've started this process, this journey, all of us together, you know, that's the problem. That's where we've ended up.

Despite the fact that every party in this place, so the Official Opposition, the government party, the independent members, who participated in it tried to participate in this in good faith, the reality is that the government – I won't say that their individual members didn't participate in good faith. The government as a whole did not. They went out of their way – it was very obvious – to make sure that the issue that we were sent there to deal with could not be dealt with, and now we're back in this Chamber with the government. I think it's ridiculous to continue to try to stand up here and not acknowledge the fact that you, the government, through you, Madam Chair, to them, said to this place: "We're going to do this all-party ministerial panel because we're going to address the Serenity issue. We're going to find out why that little toddler was murdered in our care." Then they went out of their way to block any minutes.

In fact, I don't know how many members in this place know this. In the initial part of the committee the government members spent most of their time trying to make sure that there could not even be a recording of the proceedings, and I'm not just talking about a written, *Hansard*-type recording, a recording so that people outside of Edmonton could be able to listen to the proceedings. From the very beginning it was that simple a thing. For other people who could not, you know, travel to the capital or who had other commitments but wanted to be able to hear what was going on with the panel and look at it in a transparent way and then possibly do written submissions or those types of things to be able to help us with our work: the government spent most of the beginning trying to make sure that they couldn't even hear the proceedings.

The interesting thing about this panel, Madam Chair, was, of course, that there were outside experts on it. Most of the members in this Chamber would be used to a standing committee, which is where this should have gone, quite frankly – we now know that – where it's just MLAs that are participating. They have the majority in the case of a majority government, and they can push their

agenda through. In this case there were actually some outside experts that were also part of the panel, and they were not partisan politicians, so they often had to be the tiebreaker on what we would be able to do in there despite the fact that the government wouldn't let votes happen unless they were trying to stop something.

Ultimately, frankly, I think that actually because of pressure from the press we were able to get the proceedings recorded but were still not allowed to get a transcript. So to this day you cannot go back and look at the work that that panel did. You can't even look at the debate or how they came to their conclusions unless you listen through many, many, many hours of recording. I mean, the panel was well over a year. It travelled all over the province. There's a lot of content, much of it good content. You can't search it. It's not a searchable type of database. It is extremely disappointing.

But what would have happened, Madam Chair, if we'd had the ministerial panel – I want my colleagues to think about this – but the government had convinced us to agree that the press and the public could not participate at all in the process? They would not be able to see what the ministerial panel was doing. I don't know what you think would have happened. I can tell you what I think would have happened. We certainly wouldn't have gotten the proceedings recorded in the end, because the media helped us push for that. We certainly would not have had the media, including Paula Simons, writing articles pointing out the hypocrisy of the government of the day on some of these issues.

Instead, the public wouldn't have known about it, and then we would have seen examples like we did see, Madam Chair, concrete examples – you can go back and look at *Hansard* – of the minister rising in this Chamber and answering questions on this issue and claiming that the panel was reviewing the Serenity case. Members of the panel, including the Member for Calgary-Hays and myself, were saying: “Well, we're not. You're blocking us from reviewing this, Minister. Why? Was this your intention, Minister?” It was her panel, but she was not a daily participant by design. And then she would rise and say: “Oh, yeah. Of course. It can all be reviewed. You can look through *Hansard*.” Then on the very same day you would then leave this Chamber after question period and go to a panel meeting, and the NDP majority would block any conversation to do with Serenity.

Now, do you think that that would have come to light if the press weren't able to watch and to point out some of those hypocrisies? Probably not. So the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, in pointing out that this needs to be public, is very right. No longer can we continue to allow this process to be done behind closed doors. And not just because of the NDP government of the day. As we've been very clear about since the start of this debate, this is an issue that goes across party lines. It's an issue that has happened to the previous government, it's an issue that's happened to this government, and it's an issue that's happened to governments all across the country and, quite frankly, the world. But how are you going to fix it if you continue to hide it?

If I was an NDP member, what I would be most disappointed in is the fact that I was sent there to try to make sure that this was dealt with and that my government fell back into the trap, the same trap that other governments have fallen into, of trying to sweep the stuff under the rug and deal with it behind closed doors. Often I think that the intention is good, but the reality is that by doing that, we have just turned this all back over to the same department that failed Serenity.

You can't ignore when a reporter like now Senator Paula Simons – not minister but Senator – has written extensively on this issue. You know, there's some stuff that Paula has written over the years that weren't my favourite columns – that's for sure – but on this issue I don't think there's any member from any party, in any walk

of life that would not acknowledge the hard work that she's done on this file, the incredible reporting that she did. The fact is that without her we would not even be standing in this Chamber talking about this. I don't know if she would consider herself an expert on this, but she's definitely extremely knowledgeable. I know that when I was on the panel, I sought a meeting with her to just talk about the history of this because she had reported on this so much, and she was a valuable resource to the work I did on the committee. I don't know if anybody else had an opportunity to meet with her.

When somebody like that, then, writes that the process did not work, that the report is wishy-washy, and that it won't save one child's life, should we not, then, be asking as a Chamber: what went wrong with the process? Not just the process that resulted in the death of Serenity but the process that we left this Chamber to go do for the minister.

You know, I talked about it earlier today, Madam Chair, again, that one of my great regrets – I don't know how the Member for Calgary-Hays feels about this – is that in the end we actually agreed to do this, not because I didn't want to review the issue but because our better judgment said that if we gave the minister the panel and we gave up on an all-party committee, this is what would happen. In fact, we all met about it, and we said: you know, this is likely what they're going to do, because this is, sadly, what other governments have done. But we realized that it was in the best interests of children in this province and Serenity's family and we had to give it a try, and we gave it a try.

That doesn't take away from some of the solutions that came from the panel. It doesn't at all. I think some of them are positive. I know I see some of my language, some of the ideas that I had, come out in it, and I'm sure the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays does as well. But what I don't see is anything about this: nothing about the issue that we got sent there for, nothing about how it was that it took well over two years for a cause of death to even be determined by the medical examiner, how the police found out about this case on the news because reporters broke it several years after that child's death, how it was that people from the medical community had reported that there was a problem and still nobody got in a truck and drove out there to check on that child.

5:30

I think the most shocking thing that needs to be determined is how a mother of a child who is now in care because that mother is dealing with situations in her life, who has her children in the care of a foster home where they, by all reports, were stable and they were doing well. Then those children are moved, and then that mother reports that “There's a problem with my children,” gives some information that would indicate that there is possibly a problem. And that doesn't mean that for sure there's a problem. I recognize that a family in that type of situation may report something that's not true. This mother certainly did not, but I recognize that that's a possibility. But then still, even after that, nobody got in a car and drove out there and checked on that little girl and her siblings.

An Hon. Member: Take a look.

Mr. Nixon: Just took a look. She would be alive today, Madam Chair, if that simple thing had happened. That's a fact. That doesn't mean that the government or child services are responsible for her death. That's not what I'm saying, but the fact is that if that step was taken, she would be alive today, almost certainly, and we were not allowed to poke through the process to find out why that step wasn't taken. It seems to me that that is the most important question in this entire case.

If you don't put a process in that's public, you will continue to see what happened with the panel which they had to make semipublic because of pressure from the media and political pressure but was really not that public, not as public as it should have been, that's certain. You would see the same process here again where it's not public, and how do we know what's going on? How would we know that we have another case like this and it's going to have a discussion on how you can fix legislation or make things better to make sure this case doesn't happen in the future, that the same process will not be done by the government of the day, to sweep this under the rug and actually not talk about the issue?

When I talk to most of my constituents about this and I let them know we weren't even allowed to ask those simple questions, like how the police did not even know about this, how the police did not have the file – that's a pretty reasonable question. I don't see that as a controversial question. I think that's a pretty reasonable question. Not allowed to ask it, which is why the member is proposing to make sure this is public, to hold this situation and people accountable for it in the future.

It's disappointing that, again, the government continues that process in the panel. I will remind you, Madam Chair, there's a possibility that they won't be the government the next time that this is an issue. I certainly think that at that point they probably would want this to be public so that they could do their job as the Official Opposition or the third party or the independent party or whatever they are at that point. But by doing this now, it's short sighted because they aren't able to do that, but further to that, it just ain't right. This is the right thing to do.

Yes, it will make it harder for the government of the day that is dealing with these tough situations, that are not easy to deal with, certainly. But that doesn't matter. Sometimes we have to make it tough to be able to get things fixed because the sad reality is, Madam Chair, that the way the NDP have approached this, we're going to be back in this Chamber talking about this again. And all of us are going to have to look each other in the eye and go: "You know what? The Chamber failed on this."

And they failed because of the NDP's leadership on this this time. That lands on the NDP's lap. Not the consequences of a child who's killed or something along those lines. You can't put that on them. They don't take those actions. But the fact that we're back here still having to deal with that lands on their lap. Private members across the way should think about that. They should really think about when we agreed to do this panel if this is what they expected the members of their caucus to do, to go in there and hide the issue and refuse to discuss the very issue that we sent there. They should really think about Serenity's family. They should think about that little girl who lost her life, but most of all, they should be thinking about the next little girl that may lose their life or the next little boy because that was our responsibility to get fixed.

The Chair: Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. When we look at the amendment here, I think we all agree on what the intent is here. I don't think the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who participated in the panel meeting in good faith – and we had a chance to sit and actually do the blanket exercise together, which was very moving, to say the least. I think his amendment, A2, is here with good faith. I have to give him credit because I was on one end and he convinced me on another, which was the fact that there are some unintended consequences that might come from the subamendment.

With that being said, we intend to have these meetings public. We want to open these meetings up to public, but the Member for

Calgary-Elbow has already outlined some very harsh, unintended consequences. To put a vernacular that the Minister of Service Alberta would say: we're all driving a car and we want to get from point A to point B, but we all have to gas up and we're thinking about gassing up this diesel car with regular gasoline. With that being said, what I would encourage is that members don't support this one but that we work together and we find more clarity in what we want to have public because the Member for Calgary-Elbow has already outlined concerns about the unintended consequences of people not feeling comfortable to come forward, the fact that we might not get people that we do want to hear from at these panel meetings. Let's sit down, and let's have a discussion around how we outline this to be conducted in public but that we have these safeguards in place.

With that being said, I'm not going to support the subamendment, but I'm happy to sit down. I am happy for us to get a bit more thoroughly into how we want this to be done in public because the intent that I have and I believe the Member for Calgary-Elbow has is that this meeting is going to be in public. But if we're too prescriptive with this subamendment, we run the risk of these unintended consequences that he's outlined.

The Chair: Any further comments? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, I'm disappointed to hear that, Madam Chair. The government was on the cusp of doing the right thing. They were that close to grasping some transparency. You heard my description of the Member for Calgary-Elbow's amendment, where he argued for transparency and then against this amendment at the same time. Apparently, that crazy analysis won the day over on the government side, at least so far. So that's just – we are in bizarro land right now.

I'll tell you what. What the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw just said, about "we'll sit down and negotiate a better process": well, we tried that this time and then we got into the committee meeting and we weren't able to talk about Serenity. You know what? This is the problem. If you go back – and don't take my word for it. I think we'd all agree that Senator Paula Simons did a great job on this. One of the first things she started writing about with children in care, even before the Serenity case but more so during the Serenity case, is that part of the problem is the fact that there's too much hidden from the public, which is why it never gets fixed.

The hon. member now wants to be able to sweep stuff under the carpet. I was ready to heap praise on him here. I told him that I agreed with him before because he was right. Apparently, that inspiration in favour of transparency and accountability went out the window in the last 20 minutes somehow. That's very disappointing that the government has decided to – the government was on the verge of doing the right thing here. You know what? People, no matter who they are, no matter what party they're from, when they make a mistake, it's always tempting to hide the fact that you made a mistake. That's not an NDP problem. That's not a Conservative problem. It's everybody's problem. That's all of our problem. You know what? When something goes wrong, we always say, "Well, how do I fix it without anybody knowing?", but many times – many times – you can't unless you actually talk about it out loud and admit you made a mistake.

Twenty minutes ago the government was there. I guess they had – I don't know what they had – some kind of an epiphany that transparency isn't good, that kids in care aren't deserving of that transparency. You know what? I'm sorry. This is disappointing. This actually matters. This is how you get this fixed. By not doing this, you're feeding the narrative that there's the problem that the government, whoever is the government of the day, will hide the

facts. Our government did it. That was wrong. This government is now doing it, and that's wrong, too. Come on, folks.

Mr. Ellis: This is an easy one.

Mr. McIver: This is an easy one. This is a gimme. We should all give our collective heads a shake and say yes. We can't fix the most embarrassing problem unless we're going to talk about it, because if you want to fix it, at some point it has to see the light of day.

5:40

If you're going to leave it to whatever government is in place – and I'm not saying who that's going to be. It could be you folks, could be us, could be some party that hasn't been invented yet. But five years from now, someone will be the government here. Someone will be the minister in charge of children in care, and that minister, he or she from that party, whatever it is, is going to be tempted to say: you know, this will be really embarrassing if we talk about it, so maybe the next minister can fix it; maybe the next government can fix it. That's where you're leaving it, folks. Now it really makes me wonder why you went to all this trouble.

This is like lesson 1. Even before the ministerial panel started, these things had to be more transparent, less hidden, less swept under the carpet, and now the government of the day is choosing more hidden, less transparent, more swept under the carpet, exactly the opposite of what's right, exactly the opposite of what gives us a chance of making it better.

Mr. Ellis: This is easy.

Mr. McIver: This is easy. It's unbelievable that the government, after coming to the right conclusion, was persuaded by an argument that said: let's be more transparent by not operating in public. This is what the government signed on to. The government just said: let's be more transparent by not operating in public.

Well, Madam Chair, you just can't make this up, and you just can't defend the position that the government and the Member for Calgary-Elbow have taken. Ridiculous.

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

Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. You know, I'll be very brief here, Madam Chair. Look, this is very simple: "The proceedings of the review committee must be conducted in public." As I've indicated here to my colleague from Calgary-Hays, this is a gimme. We are trying to do what's in the best interests of children here. Quite frankly, to vote against a very simple and transparent amendment like this would be utterly ridiculous.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment A2-SA2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:43 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	McIver	Starke
Barnes	Nixon	van Dijken
Ellis	Schneider	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Jansen	Renaud
Carlier	Kazim	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Clark	Littlewood	Schmidt
Connolly	Loyola	Schreiner
Coolahan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dach	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McKitrick	Turner
Eggen	Miller	Westhead
Feehan	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 37
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[Motion on subamendment A2-SA2 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Madam Chair, I suggest that we rise and report Bill 24 and, of course, report progress on Bill 22 at this time.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 24. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given the hour and the progress made today I would make the motion to adjourn for today, reminding everyone that the Eid ceremony takes place in the rotunda. It has been delayed now until a quarter after 6, but we encourage everyone to attend. We will reconvene tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m.]

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