



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 5, 2019

Day 9

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 5, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2

An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Debate adjourned June 5]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to rise this evening to speak about the government's Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Of course, it's really not that at all, as we all know. It's more an act to pick the pockets of Alberta workers. It's actually quite concerning what the bill does propose. I'm just going to take a few minutes to go through that to let my colleagues know some of the perspectives on this.

With Bill 2 we know that youth minimum wage – the government says that by doing this bill, they're going to be “restoring fairness and balance to the workplace and getting ‘Help Wanted’ signs back in the windows of Alberta businesses.” The minister of labour himself asserts that these changes will reduce red tape and increase the employment of minors, saying:

We need to encourage employers to create opportunities for all workers. These changes [will] help Alberta's businesses to do just that. We're bringing back balance, cutting red tape and making it more affordable to hire teens for their first jobs.

That is certainly something that the minister of labour said.

Certainly, there are others in our community, most notably Dr. Barnetson, who is the professor of labour relations at Athabasca University, who actually has a different assessment of what this bill will do. He says:

An examination of Bill 2 suggests that it will, in fact, yield none of these claimed benefits [that the government suggests it will]. Instead, it will reduce workers' income, make payroll administration more complex, and impede workers seeking to join a union.

Despite the proclamations of the other side, the bill indeed is not going to be producing what they say it is.

I'll just go through it in a bit of detail to explain this argument. The youth minimum wage changes, I guess, are coming into effect June 26, 2019. Of course, reducing the youth minimum wage from \$15 to \$13 certainly will reduce wage costs for employers at the expense of young workers who are, you know, having their first jobs and doing equal work of other people. Of course, certainly, on this side of the House we believe that they should be paid equally with those 18 and over; thus, the \$15 minimum wage should be continued.

I know this government really wants to support very much the reduction of red tape. They even have a bill that is called the Red Tape Reduction Act. But this particular part of Bill 2 legislation actually increases the red tape, really onerous work for the employers, small businesses oftentimes who may not have a lot of resources themselves. It's actually going to put an additional burden on them with this differential because sometimes it's \$13, and then at other times it's \$15. So there's quite a bit to wade through in the

youth minimum wage because after so many hours of work in a week, then actually the employer needs to pay the higher wage, the \$15 minimum wage, as opposed to \$13.

How do they determine that? They have to know which employees are students – you know, some students may not be in school, and it's sort of determined on who is in school – know when each employee's school is in session or on a break because that also is something else that they have to take into account. They have to vary each employee's hourly wage depending on the hours worked, whether school is in session, and they have to change the worker's wages and payroll calculations when workers turn 18. So there are quite a few things.

I certainly hope that the employers will, you know, do their due diligence to make sure that they're paying the correct wage to these youth, but it might be just an overwhelming prospect for them. Certainly, if this is your first job and you see that there's a mistake on your pay stub, are you going to have the confidence as a young worker? I hope you do. I hope that they are supported by those around them and that they can question that. But I mean, also, you have some compassion for these small businesses. It's a lot of work to sort of understand this legislation and make sure that the students are paid the proper amount.

You know, even without this administrative red tape argument, moving to make it a lower youth rate is really just not fair. It's not fair to the workers, the youth, who work just as hard as someone who's 18 or older. We know it's actually been proven that it has stabilized employment oftentimes, which is a big benefit for employers.

For example, I know that when I was actually the minister of labour at the beginning of our mandate back in 2015, I met with employers, and there was one owner of a Dairy Queen who said that he already paid the minimum wage. He already paid \$15 an hour, and he was happy to do that because – you know what that meant for him? – that meant that he had stable staff. Staff wanted to work for him. They were getting a fair wage, so that increased morale and stability for him. He said that some of his staff had been there for two years, and these were youth. So that made a big difference for him, because just the cost to train workers can be quite expensive for employers. He was very supportive of our government's move to increase minimum wage.

Another example that I can give you is that, certainly, we know that in the mountain parks that's been an ongoing issue for many, many years, making sure that we have workers in those areas. Increasing the minimum wage has created increased stability, again, for businesses. The workers are being paid fairly at a good rate, in some cases a living wage. In some parts of Alberta the living wage actually is \$15. In the major centres like Edmonton and Calgary we're closer to \$17, so it's not quite a living wage here. In the parks it's probably not either, but in some areas when you have a \$15 minimum wage, that makes a big difference, and people can actually have a living wage, live with dignity.

We know that Alberta has the largest income gap of any province in Canada, and certainly in my 30 years as a social worker I worked with many vulnerable people and continue to support many folks. Lifting the floor – that's sort of what it's called. When you lift the minimum wage, you're lifting the floor, and you're supporting people who are quite vulnerable in our society so that they don't have to work a full-time job and then go to the food bank. You know, youth a lot of times live independently. They're supporting themselves. Certainly, we heard the story of the young woman from Fort Saskatchewan whose father had lost his job, and she was supporting her family, and there are other stories like this.

Paying this fair wage, you know, really is something that I think is so important. Certainly, we believe that people deserve equal pay

for equal work. Besides that, of course, as I've already articulated, you know, it's kind of a very cumbersome piece of legislation for employers to understand all the ins and outs of it. I can't imagine that it's going to be easy for small businesses to implement, and I know that that's something that your government is certainly very concerned about, so I really ask you to look at this. I know that that's not what you want, and certainly we don't want that either on this side of the House. Please take some consideration of that.

7:40 p.m.

Another aspect is the Employment Standards Code. This is again in Bill 2, the new changes to the legislation, the general holiday pay part. Right now, for example, to be eligible for holiday pay, you must work your regular scheduled shifts before and after that holiday as well as on the holiday if asked. If you don't work the holiday, you get your average daily rate regardless of when the holiday falls, and if you do work on the holiday, you get time and a half your hourly rate for the hours worked, so your regular rate plus another day off with pay. That's kind of how it works now.

But now this Bill 2 proposes some additional requirements. You must be employed by the employer for 30 days preceding the holiday. That's brand new. Of course, that means some people may not be eligible. If they've just been newly hired and there's a holiday, they won't get that; again, hence, pick your pockets. It's another way that we're taking money out of workers' pockets. Another requirement: if the holiday falls on a day that you do not normally work and you don't work that holiday, you are not entitled to general holiday pay. Certainly, the long and the short of this pick-your-pockets bill is that workers will have less take-home pay. Shift workers will be impacted much more significantly. For people who work shifts, I mean, that's another concern. They'll be more greatly impacted by these changes.

There's also a downside, and it's very similar to the downside for the reduction in youth minimum wage. For employers there is, again, increased administrative complexity in determining who is entitled to pay on a holiday and who isn't. Again, I'll just reiterate that even though your government has certainly made it very clear that they're a government that cares about red tape reduction, this is creating more administrative burden for small businesses, employers. I think this is something that's kind of strange, and I really encourage you to look at that. My understanding from what I'm hearing is that that's not something your government wants. I'm, you know, just wanting to support your congruence with your policies.

Another aspect of this Bill 2 is overtime premiums. Again, that's in the Employment Standards Code. Currently if you work more than 8 hours in a day or 44 hours in a week, you're entitled to time and a half of your normal rate for those overtime hours. An employee can bank this overtime and draw down that banked time. If an employee doesn't draw down this banked time, it is then paid at the overtime rate. That's kind of our current situation that we have in Alberta right now.

Of course, you know, we have a lot of seasonal workers here, say in the summer months. For the construction industry it's pretty miserable to work when it's minus 40, so a lot more building is done in the summer season, and people work longer hours. Of course, the sun doesn't set till super late at night, so it makes sense, and it's feasible for people. Maybe in those winter months when we're having minus 30, minus 40, snowy conditions, they can't work during that time. This allows them to work longer hours and bank them and then be able to have income when it's a slower season and it's not so busy for them. The employee can then draw down in the slower season.

Certainly, you know, myself, even though I'm a social worker and I don't work outside so much, maybe you think, "Oh; well, that doesn't sort of apply to my profession," but I was always in charge of the annual conference, when about a thousand social workers would come together. At those times we were working from dawn till dusk, let me tell you. We had to co-ordinate all the workshops and work hard. I oftentimes was working maybe 12 hours a day. I would just bank that time, and then after the conference or a little bit later on I was able to take that time off. So that was very helpful.

But the pick-your-pockets bill says that banked overtime has to be straight time. That's actually taking away – you know, time and a half – that half from workers; hence, the pick-your-pockets bill. It's counted as hour for hour instead of an hour and a half. This will put workers in a more vulnerable position. It will take away income that they currently would get.

If we look at an example of an average oil and gas worker and say that they're working overtime on a 12-week project – oftentimes there's project work that, you know, we have to. . .

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was very interested to hear what the member was about to talk about regarding oil and gas workers. As we know, they have been hard hit with the drop in the price of oil, what our economy has been through, and I just wonder what the changes in Bill 2 would mean to them if the member wouldn't mind elaborating.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker and, through you, to the member for letting me continue. I was just looking at sort of an average oil and gas worker. Say they're working, you know, longer hours, working overtime. They're on maybe a 12-week project. There's a deadline. They have to get it done by that time, so they may be working, let's say, approximately 10 hours of overtime a week. According to the bill – and there are some calculations, and certainly I'm happy to give details to the House after – it's over \$2,500 they just give up.

Hence, you know, we have named this the pick-your-pockets bill. Obviously, the worker is worse off, and despite the government's claims that this is such a positive move forward, it's really not. It's taking a step backwards. Those workers who are doing that kind of shift work, that intensive work and seasonal work are not going to be making as much money as they can currently. It's really rolling back their wages, almost, by just denying them that time and a half.

You know, our opposition certainly feels very strongly that workers need to be supported. We need to diminish that gap between low- and high-income earners and have more equality. We know that a society that has greater equality actually is a healthier society, a society where everyone is supported. Sadly, this bill is not doing that. It's not supporting them.

The bill goes on, under the Labour Relations Code, and talks about unionization and how to become part of a union. Currently 40 per cent of the employees must support a union's application for certification to the Alberta Labour Relations Board. Currently if more than 65 per cent already say that they are in support of that, there's no need for that vote. That's called a card check certification. But this bill, again, proposes to roll back some of those advances. It proposes mandatory certification votes in all applications. So even though you have obviously a clear majority, over 65 per cent of employees would like to have their organization

become a union, this bill proposes that there must be mandatory votes for all applications.

With no-vote-needed, card-check-certification legislation, employers can't interfere with the employees' choice. Sadly, that's what happens. Employers intervene with them. You know, they are threatened to lose their jobs, and of course then the opportunity for union certification goes down dramatically. Alberta already has the lowest unionization of any province in Canada. When we were government, of course, we modernized labour laws. That was shifting, and there was a growing trend, but here this bill will now take us back.

7:50 p.m.

Of course, we know that unionized workplaces have better working conditions for their employees. That's just a given fact. Not only do they support their employees specifically, but they have a lighthouse effect so that if other employees in other non-unionized settings work closely, you know, say, in the city of Edmonton – some are unionized; some aren't – the lighthouse effect means that employers have to consider the benefits, the salaries, and the support employees and unions get. It has a lighthouse effect, which means that employers who want to keep and retain employees must really match and make sure that they're giving them the benefits and the salaries of a unionized workplace. We know that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to get up and have an opportunity to speak to this Assembly. It's not necessarily a pleasure to get up to speak to this bill because it is so terribly misguided and cruel and mean-spirited and generally not likely to achieve the objects that they are seeking or at least not the stated objects that it is seeking. As many people have already talked about, this bill is inappropriately named the open for business act or some silliness like that, and many people in our opposition have chosen instead to refer to it as the pick-your-pocket bill.

But before we get to exactly how it proceeds to pick the pocket of regular working Albertans all over the place, let me just talk a little bit about, you know, this idea of opening Alberta for business and how we might best approach this common problem that we all face, which is the fact that our economy is sluggish, many people have lost their jobs, and many people are still looking for work. This is absolutely the front-of-mind consideration for all Albertans, with a tremendous level of urgency felt by those who are actually looking for work or looking for more work or looking for better paying work in order to help support their families the way they were able to do before the drop in the international price of oil.

Just to give a bit of context here and a bit of history, Madam Speaker, as you all know, Alberta is sitting on tremendously valuable resources, oil and gas resources, that have allowed us to punch above our weight internationally, have allowed us to punch above our weight nationally, and indeed have allowed us to punch above our weight locally or provincially in terms of the quality of life that Albertans have enjoyed, the overall wage levels that Albertans have enjoyed, the employment levels that Albertans have enjoyed. Indeed, on some occasions, not always – it's very inconsistent; it's been tremendously poorly managed; it's been very unstable – but periodically, we've also been able to enjoy strong public services. I don't just speak about the time when we were in government. I also, you know, look back to some of the tremendously innovative and nation-leading initiatives that were

taken under the former Progressive Conservative government led by Peter Lougheed.

All these things were things that we were able to enjoy in Alberta because of these tremendous resources that we have in this province under the ground. I think I'm probably, with most of the people in this building, going to get consensus on the statement that nobody here actually put it there. No amount of tax cuts, no amount of investment in health care and, on the flip side, no amount of good education, no amount of cutting education had anything to do with whether those resources are there. They're there, and we have been able as a province to benefit from them. Now, obviously, there are other jurisdictions in the world that have benefited far more strategically, effectively, intelligently than we have in Alberta from similar levels of resources, but there's no question that we have benefited from them. That's lovely. As a result of that, we have had a strong economy, and business has come here, and we've had a lot of businesses.

Now, the one downside to that, though, just to give some context, is that we didn't do the work we needed to do to diversify our economy. We allowed ourselves to sit back and go: "Oh, that's a thing for the next day. We've got money coming in, and everyone has got jobs. In fact, we have too many jobs and not enough people, so what we have to do is now find a way to import cheap labour and all that kind of stuff." Things were coming up roses. It wasn't exactly the best plan. We weren't really thinking about down the road. We weren't thinking about the climate. We weren't doing the kinds of innovative things that could actually ensure protection of, you know, four or five generations to come like other jurisdictions have done with their investments. But things were good.

The only problem is that we didn't prepare for the inevitable, which, of course, is the drop in the price of oil, which is what began to happen, as many people here know, in late 2014 such that the predecessor to the UCP, the PC government, chose to call the election a year early because they got the kinds of briefings that the front bench here or some of the front bench here now get regularly, and they could tell that things were going to go from disturbing and concerning to really bad. They decided they wanted to try to slip that election under the nose of the people of Alberta before they realized how bad it was going to get. So we had an election a full year early. We broke the law to have the election early in the hopes of not having to face Albertans when the chickens came home to roost and the inevitable job losses and challenges that the Alberta economy is facing were presented to Albertans.

As it turned out, you know, it's interesting. At the time, when I saw them break the law and call the election early, I thought: oh, that's not going to work out too well for them. Certainly, at that particular time it didn't because – who knew? – history was made. A different government was elected, not one that people expected to see elected, but we were elected, and there you go.

I suppose, you know, through the lens of history one could say that maybe it wasn't that bad a move because suddenly what happened was, sure enough, the inevitable happened. We hadn't prepared. Forty-four years of the predecessor party to the current UCP government hadn't done the work to prepare our economy for a tremendous drop in the price of oil, one that I think everyone knows now is not going to recover in the next two months or three months like previously but that is going to really hurt us for some time. That happened, and then people lost their jobs. People became very frustrated and worried about their future and the future of their families. As a result, they started desperately looking for any answer – any answer – to change the situation because they weren't used to what was starting to look like chronic unemployment, and they were desperate to have somebody give them a magic solution.

Well, lucky them. In came the Premier, and he rustled up, pulled up, dusted off the cobwebs from some long-time historically discredited, hurtful, negative economic models, managed to get a couple of endorsers from the notoriously conservative public policy sector there at the U of C, and decided: no; the way to create jobs, our magic formula that we're going to sell to Albertans, is that we're going to give massive tax breaks to corporations without assuring or asking for or getting any kind of guarantee of anything in return.

8:00 p.m.

But no, no, no, that's not enough. In order to make things even more attractive in our magical world of job creation, we are going to queue up to probably – and we don't know this yet, so hopefully I'm wrong. Hopefully, I'm apologizing to the Finance minister a year from now, and none of this is actually true. I suspect that what we're actually going to do is that we're going to cut education, we're going to cut health care, we're going to cut school lunches, we're going to cut special-needs programs in the schools, we're going to make postsecondary education much, much more expensive, and we're going to roll back infrastructure spending. We are going to make life harder for Albertans who struggle the most.

This somehow will be part of a magical job-creation formula that is part of this witches' brew of Reaganomics and other kinds of plans that folks dusted off when they were looking for something to offer the legitimately worried and frustrated Albertans who were struggling with the new reality of oil at \$50 a barrel and no way to move it out of the province, which is also something that, to be clear, was a chronic problem that you could have seen coming 15 years ago but was not addressed by the Conservative government here in Alberta or the Conservative government in Ottawa. History is just a thing that apparently doesn't last past the most popular meme; nonetheless, it's kind of a thing that folks should think about every now and then.

The other, final element of this magical brew of pretend job-creation strategies that the current Premier offered up to a legitimately worried and frustrated province of people who needed to find some hope for job creation in the short term was this idea that the way to create jobs is on the backs of the most vulnerable people in the province and that you create jobs by keeping down workers, by suppressing their wages, by suppressing their rights, by figuratively putting your heel on the back of their neck and stepping down hard, that somehow the act of doing this will hang a neon sign to the world of investors out there, who will come and invest their money in Alberta because they, too, can do the things that will keep workers underpaid, undervalued, with fewer rights than they have in other parts of this fabulous country that we call Canada. It seems strange when I describe it, Madam Speaker. It really does. But that, in a nutshell, is the strange, magical formula of the – all the power to him – rather talented communications effort that the now Premier presented to Albertans in the last election. This is part of it.

I want to begin by saying that I fundamentally and completely disagree with this magical job-creation formula that is being put forward by the members opposite, in part, because I just think it's cruel and it's mean. I think the idea that you can create economic prosperity by growing inequality, by having a small group of exceptionally lucky and well-heeled haves at the expense of an ever-growing group of have-nots is fundamentally flawed.

This idea – the member opposite has actually talked about it. He said: oh, it's a meritocracy. It's a meritocracy. Of course, meritocracy is another word for saying: "Hey, I was born into a family where mom and dad both have lots and lots of money, so I got to be sent to a really well-heeled private school, and I got tutors

when I had trouble getting through my classes. I never had to go hungry because we actually had a housekeeper who cooked lovely meals for me, and I was never late for class because I got my own car when I was 16," and all these things. Somehow that is evidence of a meritocracy. It's not, by the way. It's evidence of the kind of structured entitlement that goes from generation to generation and slowly makes a society more and more unhealthy.

Nonetheless, I disagree with the idea that is being put here. I don't believe that economic progress is achieved by cutting school lunch programs. I do not believe that jobs are created by firing special-needs educators. I do not believe that more jobs are created by paying people half as much money. If we do create jobs that way, they're not jobs we should be creating, Madam Speaker. Obviously, you know, the logical extension of that argument is: "Hey, why pay them anything? Just think how many jobs we'd have if everybody worked for free. Oh, my goodness, there would be so many jobs." Interestingly, the GDP would probably go up. It would actually go up. The only problem is that we'd have a little problem with 99 per cent of the population.

That is the logical extension of the kinds of things these folks are talking about and the overall vision for economic growth that they have: pull back government, pull back investment in postsecondary education, ensure that the only people who have access to it are those who have lots of money, make sure that we do not maintain any cap on tuition, for instance. I remember at one point having a conversation about tuition and actually hearing a member from the predecessor to this party talk about how if tuition was inexpensive or, heaven forbid, free, well, then – you know what? – it would be too easy to get in, and people wouldn't value it. I couldn't believe my ears when I heard that. I think that postsecondary education is absolutely fundamental to all of our futures. It also happens to be a fundamental component to a healthy, growing, diversified, modern, innovative economy that actually isn't entirely tied or unhealthily tied to one commodity and one price over which we have almost no control.

Ah, yes, going back to my point: the economy. Don't cut school lunches, don't cut teachers, don't close hospitals, don't pick on young workers, don't pick the pockets of workers, and for heaven's sake stop demonizing unions. The idea that all those things make the economy stronger is profoundly misguided.

Let's talk about this one subset of that profoundly misguided job-creation plan that the folks over there have managed to convince themselves will actually create jobs in this province, the pick-your-pockets act. There are so many elements of it which are deeply offensive, and the members opposite really are not selling it in a way that connects adequately, in my mind, to the reality of what it is they are doing. You know, I don't think that shows the highest level of intellectual integrity by selling – I get talking points; I do. I get talking points. I get political communications, but there is a point in that process where you kind of lose the plot and it becomes rather Orwellian. It just is absolutely the opposite of what the bill is actually doing. I will say that the members opposite have certainly reached that in terms of many of the talking points around this particular piece of legislation, because it does not do the things that they claim it will do or that they claim it needs to do.

Let me start with the overtime pieces and the changes in this bill around overtime. Now, I imagine that at some point I will get a chance to ask the Premier about this specifically, but I will comment about it today. I was quite disappointed in what I can only assume is the Premier's lack of knowledge about this legislation and his lack of knowledge and misunderstanding about what it means. I can only assume that he just happened to be misinformed when he made the comments that he did about this legislation – I think it was last week or two weeks ago – talking about: "Don't you worry. This

reversion from time-and-a-half overtime to straight time will only happen if employees ask for it and if they agree to it." Now, that's simply not true, Madam Speaker. That's not true.

8:10 p.m.

Anybody who sits down and reads through this legislation with any care and attention – and I'm not suggesting that the Premier has time to sit down and read every bit of legislation that his cabinet passes, but presumably someone is advising him when he has his briefing book in front of him and his talking points. I get that he's got talking points, Madam Speaker, but presumably the people who write the talking points do the homework and check it against the facts so that the talking points don't end up actually contradicting the actual ink on the bill that's in front of us here in the Assembly, because that's awkward. Just, you know, from my own experience being Premier, I find it awkward when my speaking points are completely contradictory to what I'm putting forward to this Assembly and asking them to pass. I just think that as the Premier you should try to avoid those things.

The reality is that it is not something that is voluntary on the part of employees. The part of the act that has had overtime changed from one and a half times to straight time is the part that talks about banking overtime, and the part that talks about banking overtime outlines the circumstances under which you can have an agreement where you are banking overtime. The circumstances for that are where the employer and the employees agree, and then after that the agreement is in place.

Now, I know I'm not the only person to work in businesses that are, say, for instance, seasonal. The employer sits down with his three employees in January, who happen to be the only employees who are around at that time of the year, and they work out this agreement. Then they proceed to go hire the 100 employees who will be working with them through the remainder of the season. Those employees are told: hey, there's an agreement. They're not told, "Hey, you can opt out of the agreement," because – guess what? – they can't. They're told that there's an agreement. That's the way this legislation works.

How do we know it works that way? That's what we heard from people when we reviewed this legislation in the first place and made the changes to it that we did. We heard from people that this was being used as a means by employers in this province to get around paying overtime. We heard it from responsible business owners, who were worried about irresponsible business owners competing with them unfairly by using these rules to get around the obligation to pay overtime. We heard about it, of course, from workers themselves. We heard about it from unions. We heard about it from the staff within the ministry. We heard about it from academics who had written about the sorry, sorry state of Alberta's labour laws. We heard it from everyone, and it was true.

Then what we did was that we read the legislation, Madam Speaker. We looked at the legislation, and we went: "Hmm, yeah. If I was an employer who didn't want to pay overtime, this is exactly what I would do, and there is not a single, solitary thing in this piece of legislation that would stop me from doing it." So that's what people were doing.

What this means, then, is that in many, many cases, in many parts of the economy right now where people work overtime – I'm sure you're listening very carefully to everything that all of us over here say, so you will have heard it from other members of our caucus already. There are roughly 400,000 Albertans who earn overtime pay every year. In many of the sectors in which they work, it is seasonal, and there are, in many of these cases, these banked overtime agreements.

Now, it wasn't a problem with us because we just said: "Fine. Yeah. Bank your overtime. Have at 'er. Giddy up." I think it's great to bank your overtime because, you know – I'll be quite honest – lots of people would much prefer to bank their overtime, have the flexibility to take time off in lieu, all that kind of stuff. I mean, certainly, back in the day when I wasn't working here, the idea of being able to take time in lieu rather than getting paid out was something that I much preferred because when I was younger and was raising a family and my kids were younger and had greater demands, what I really wanted was time. The opportunity to choose time instead of money, once you're outside the parameters of having your regular, predictable rate of pay, that was an absolute privilege.

The ability to choose time and to choose to bank it is bold. But to have it imposed upon me at straight time rather than allowing me to take it at time and a half: well, no. That's an entirely different thing altogether. That's a very greedy hand reaching into my pocket and taking something out of it, and that is not a thing that is particularly advisable or appealing. "Appealing" really is the word. It's not appealing to workers to have someone reach into their pocket and pick their pocket, take their money.

This is a change that this act does. It is a lot of money for regular working folks. I think it's fair to say that in many, many cases people who work overtime in an unpredictable way and aren't on sort of a salary where, you know, overtime is not necessarily compensated are tending to be lower income folks. Now, not altogether, because of course you've probably also heard us say, which is true, that the sector that is most negatively impacted by this is, in fact, the construction and the oil and gas sector. Nonetheless, the rest of them tend to be wage-earning folks, and those folks don't tend to earn as much as salaried people.

Here what we are doing is finding a way to take a significant amount of money out of the pockets of people who probably are in the mid to lower end of the wage-earning scale in this province and doing so while not even being accurate about the fact that that's what you're doing by saying misinformed things like workers can choose this. You know, folks over there love to wax: "Wow. You know, they should just sit down, and they should negotiate it. That's what they should do. You betcha."

You know, I remember when I was working one summer picking strawberries at a market garden. I've got to tell you that I cannot tell you how much agency I felt I had to go and talk to the owner of that market garden, just march right up and say: "Sir, I just think we need to renegotiate this deal that you've got here between me and the other 30 or 40 employees and you. Let's just sit down because – you know what? – we're equal partners. We're equal partners, and I've decided that I'm going to renegotiate my wage."

Well, that's the most ridiculous thing on the planet, Madam Speaker, and anyone here who's ever worked, you know, a job like that, a hard-working, labouring, lower end of the wage scale job, knows that the idea that you just march up to your boss and sit down and have a nice little cup of coffee and tell him that you've decided to renegotiate your wage, that is fiction. It is fiction, and it's disrespectful. It is utterly disrespectful for members on the other side to talk about those pretend situations. It's disrespectful to the hard-working people who are finding that their wages are going down and who will find that under this bill they could lose up to \$2,700 every 12 weeks. It is disrespectful to talk to that worker and tell them that they should just march into their CEO's office and have a little talk about how their wage needs to change. What utter nonsense.

8:20 p.m.

Anyhow, I just hope that on this piece someone will take the time to go speak to whoever it is that is now working in the Premier's office writing up his talking points for his question period binder, take the time to pull that little piece out and have him acknowledge that he was incorrect when he said to this House that this is about providing flexibility for workers because they get to choose whether or not they are part of these banked overtime agreements. It was wrong, and he shouldn't have told us that. I would urge all of you to do him a favour and just help a Premier out and get his folks to fix his talking points so he stops making mistakes like this on the record. You know, again, it's awkward. It's just awkward.

What are some of the other parts of this bill that are in play? Well, one of the other ones, of course, is the decision to get rid of card check certification and go back to the two-step process that was previously in place. Now, this is another one of those decisions that is the product of many years of creative storytelling on the parts of folks who would prefer to see unions completely erased from the employment scenario or the employment environment here in this province and in every other jurisdiction around the world.

There's a long, proud history of employers union-busting, doing everything they can to fight against unions, I mean back in the really good old days, you know, if you go back to the coal mines in the northeast U.S. at that point. I'm sure history buffs here would be interested if you didn't already know the history of — Mackenzie King: was he first, second, third? I should know this — our Prime Minister and the relationship that he had with some of the union busters in the northeast U.S. over 100 years ago. There was violence associated with it. There was a lot of violence, a lot of injuries and deaths suffered by people who were struggling to set up unions and protect their rights and the safety of workers in the mines. At that time employers engaged in some hideous, hideous attacks on working people.

Now, obviously things have evolved tremendously since then, and we don't see that kind of thing anymore, but there is no question that there is a subset of employers — and I wouldn't say that it's a large group. I would say that, perhaps, the members opposite overrepresent that group a little bit right now. But there is definitely a subset of employers who think that unions are bad, no matter what.

Mackenzie King was the 10th Prime Minister. Thank you for that little piece of information there. That was very helpful. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Anyway, they just think that unions are awful, and they would do whatever they could to avoid them. In doing that, there are some really interesting narratives that have been created as part of the more sophisticated and far less violent efforts to avoid unions. That is this idea that individual workers, if they could just choose, would choose to never have a union and that the union is represented by this great big, six-foot-eight, 300-pound, unshaven thug. That's what the union is. It's a thug. In fact, they use the word "thug" after the word "union" a lot. It's really quite something. There's this narrative that that's the union.

So the six-foot-eight, 300-pound thug marches onto the shop floor and intimidates all these poor, independently minded workers, who are quite happily sitting down and individually negotiating their pay raises with their boss when they're having lattes, whenever they want to, that this big thug is intimidating workers. The union boss, the union thug, is intimidating these individual workers and marching around the workplace like he owns it. Oh, it's just awful. The employer and the workers are cowering. It's just a horrible situation, and we need to do everything we can to avoid that. That's the narrative.

Of course, fundamental to this narrative is this other fiction, which is this idea that, again, in your average workplace, your factory floor or wherever, Joe or Jill Average Worker has the ability to just call up the boss, march upstairs to the manager's office, sit down, just sort of barge in and say: "Hey, I'm just going to use your latte maker there. I'm going to make myself one. We're going to sit down and you and I are going to have a talk and you're going to give me a raise." That's how it works every day, and it works out so well. That same fiction, of course, infuses this conversation about whether unions are a good thing or a bad thing.

Now, in fact, what we know is that unions are fundamentally responsible for the fact that we have weekends now, that workers have the right to refuse unsafe work without being fired, that women have the right to raise complaints about being harassed in the workplace without being fired, that human rights as a whole must be respected in the workplace, and that workers as a whole have the right to come together and negotiate reasonable working conditions with their employers. Oh, pensions, that's a good one. That's another one that came from unions: pensions. I wouldn't know; I don't have a pension. The whole world thinks I have a pension. As everyone in here knows, pretty much nobody in this room has a pension except the Premier. Pensions are a good thing, and the Premier owes his pension probably, ultimately, to unions, if you go back far enough.

Nonetheless, these are all good things that came from unions. They came from workers coming together to negotiate collectively with their employer because they found that those one-on-one latte events weren't working out for them quite as well as they had hoped. Anyway, because some employers are not keen on unions, they certainly want to make sure that they have every opportunity to discourage unions.

So then we have another version of this fictional narrative out there about these independent, latte-sipping, independently negotiating factory-floor workers and the imposing union thug. That is that when they sign a membership card to say they want to join a union, obviously they didn't mean it. I mean, it's just a pen and a paper and their signature. Clearly, they were intimidated by the union thug I described previously. These poor workers cannot be expected to know their minds when they sign these cards. It's ridiculous. What we need to do is protect them from themselves and also from our big six-foot-eight, 300-pound union thug. So what we do is that after they go through this process of signing the cards and putting pen to paper and putting their signature on it — that is apparently not good enough to demonstrate their desire for a union. No. What we now have to do is that we have to give the employer I think it's 90 days, but someone could correct me if I'm wrong. We have to give the employers the opportunity to protect them from themselves. We must also give the employer the opportunity to protect them from that 300-pound union thug who's marching around the factory floor with impunity and complete access to every worker and the ability to intimidate them into signing the card.

God bless the people that come up with these stories and the degree to which they are actually successful at making people believe them. You know, they certainly have a talent, but every now and then it's helpful, again, to look at facts, to look at history, to look at research.

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We see, for instance, that when there was a two-stage approach to certification in B.C., 80 per cent of employers fought the certification, and when they went to a card check, the number of unions that were certified went up by something like 50 per cent. The number of times that workers or employers were able to sustain

a claim of there being intimidation by the union of either the employer or the worker was almost nonexistent, but the frequency of documented and adjudicated unfair labour practices by the employer against the workers was very high. I can't remember the number, but it was – I don't know – 100 to 1 or something. I mean, the point is that that's the way it worked. We have articles out there that look at the fact that there's really no evidence of any allegation – or maybe one or two over the course of 15 years – of a union intimidating or engaging in an unfair labour practice to push a worker into signing a card, but there were copious – copious – pieces of evidence of employers using their influence to intimidate workers out of voting for a union.

Let me talk a little bit about that, this spectre of employers intimidating workers out of voting for a union. Let me just say at the outset – again, I want to make it very clear. What I'm talking about is a small subset of employers. There are lots of great employers out there who are perfectly happy to have their employees be unionized. I can think of – well, I won't get into that; I don't know what's confidential and what's not confidential – really excellent major corporate players in Alberta and in Calgary that are wonderful corporate citizens who have been extremely sophisticated and mature and accommodating when their employees have selected a union or chosen to become unionized. There are many, many employers out there that are absolutely fine with it. They understand the positive outcomes of unionization. Let me just say that. I'm not by any means wanting to paint all employers with this brush because that's not the real thing. It's a subset that believe that their path to prosperity must be paved by shortchanging their workers and breaching their rights.

Anyway, when we talk about the employer's ability – I've talked about the narrative around the union thug's ability to march into the workplace and intimidate workers into signing cards. Now, just to be clear, unions don't have access to workplaces, so that's actually not a true thing. Unions don't even have access to workers, so that's not a true thing. Typically, when unions organize workers, what happens is that workers will go to unions and say: we're interested. Then those workers will organize themselves and bring their colleagues to meet with the union organizer, who will then give them the cards. The union organizer has no access to the workplace, and they have no access to the list of employees. They don't have that. That's just not a thing.

What the employer has is not only access to the workplace but complete control over the workplace and, of course, complete access to the list of employees. They also have the ability to control and manage the workplace. They can say things like: "Hey, there's a union drive going on. Huh, coincidentally, vacations are cancelled for the next four weeks." Or: "Hey, there's a union drive going on. Coincidentally, we're going to have you all come in and work more overtime. Oh, on that overtime agreement, y'all signed up for straight time, and you're going to have to bank it." Or: "Hey, Franco over there, who happens, in my mind, to maybe be the one that first reached out to the union, but I will never say this, doesn't have a job anymore, but it has nothing to do with that. Oh no, no. It has to do with the fact that I've been planning to fire Franco for a long time."

These are not things I'm making up. I urge you to go to the Labour Relations Board decisions of any province or of the country and read the decisions around unfair labour practices. These are exactly the circumstances that you will see described there. That is what it looks like. That is the kind of thing that creates a lot of disruption and, of course, undermines the right of workers to choose a union, which is now a constitutionally recognized right by the Supreme Court of Canada. Only in the past five or six years have the right to organize and the right to be part of a union been elevated

and recognized as part of the freedom of association rights under the Charter. But it's really hard for workers to do that because they're in a scenario where, by virtue of agreeing to be an employee, they say to their boss: you are in control of me; that's what you're paying me for.

There are many, many mechanisms at the disposal of this particular subset of employers that wants to avoid unions if they can. That is why our government made the decision to move to the commonly used card check mechanism. But you know what? We also took a pretty pragmatic approach to it. We thought: yeah; you know, 51 per cent versus 49 per cent is pretty close, and to have a union come into a place automatically where only 51 per cent of people have expressed their desire to be part of a union, that's a bit much.

Quite frankly, I know myself, from friends and others whom I know who work in the labour movement, that good union organizers would not actually ever seek a certification with 51 per cent. I mean, I'm not saying that it doesn't happen. It does happen with not wise union organizers. But the good ones know that that's really not wise. If you actually certify a workplace with only 51 per cent support and then you sit down and try to negotiate an agreement, you know, the whole thing is going to fall apart because you're not going to have your union members onside with you to negotiate well. And if half your members are not in support of what needs to be done to negotiate a good deal, i.e. potentially threaten to strike, then you're never going to negotiate, and the whole thing is a wash anyway.

So why would you ever try to certify with 51 per cent? It's not wise anyway. To actually do that would create a lot of labour-employer strife, and it would create more fights than it was worth. So we just decided that it didn't make sense to do that. We're not here to create fights between working people and their employers around the province. So we said: no; we're going to pick a different number. We're not going to use 50 per cent plus one. We're going to use 65 per cent. If unions can get 65 per cent of people to take a pen and look at a card and read it and sign it on their own volition, then that's pretty good evidence that they made the decision that they want a union. That 65 per cent, you know, leaves a lot of room for movement. By doing that, you then are able to move quickly to the negotiating process.

Now, if it turns out that the union still doesn't have the support of people, well, then, the whole thing will end up being a wash ultimately anyway once they go to negotiate the agreement. But if you've got 65 per cent, that's not likely to be the case. You're not in this process where you are creating more divisiveness and lost productivity, quite honestly, in the workplace by having this two-step process, where suddenly we are compelling our workplaces to get into this kind of fighting scenario where the employer starts fighting against his or her own workers. That was why we did the 65 per cent card check, a very pragmatic decision.

But, no, these folks again have bought into that narrative. They've bought into the narrative of a 300-pound union thug intimidating these poor workers into signing these cards. They've bought into the fiction of the union having any capacity to actually campaign to workers or talk to workers in the workplace. They've bought into the fiction that employers don't somehow have a far accelerated ability to influence workers during the course of a union vote. They've bought into all of that, or maybe they wrote it themselves. I'm not even sure who's buying into a narrative or who's actually creating the narrative for their own interests or the interests of their donors. I'm not sure. In any event, they have completely bought into it.

8:40 p.m.

The result, then, is that the frequency of unionization will be limited and will be reduced, and the benefits of unionization, which can be an organized means of managing the workplace, a respectful way to hear and navigate through the concerns of workers, a mechanism of giving working people a voice in their workplace, all those things will be less frequent. Wages will go down, more overtime agreements at straight time will be imposed on working people, and – guess what? – working people will end up with less money, and employers will end up with more. Hence, we move back into the magical thinking of the current government around how the way to create jobs is actually to grow inequality and to make the gap larger as much as you possibly can and to take rights away from those who already have the fewest rights. Somehow that is the magical path to creating jobs.

It's wrong. It's not, at least not the kinds of jobs that I believe Albertans want. I don't think Albertans want Alberta to become Mexico north. I'm pretty sure they don't want that to be our competitive advantage, but really that's the natural consequence, the logical consequence of the path that this UCP government is embarking upon.

Now, there are a few other things in Bill 2 as well which are basically other ways to go after workers' salaries and money. Apparently, that is how we create jobs. We just pay people less, and somehow there are going to be magical new jobs created. I think it's totally untrue, and there's more and more evidence to that end every day, but whatever.

In any event, there's this whole issue around holiday pay. I don't even know why you would do that. Honestly, it's like: I'm going to march into office, and my second bill is going to be about taking money away from working people on Christmas Day. Like, for the love of God. I just don't understand. Why be so petty? I just don't get it. And Christmas Day, of all things.

Our province will be . . .

Mr. Schmidt: It's part of their war on Christmas.

Ms Notley: It's war on Christmas, indeed. Yeah, yeah. War on fun, war on Christmas, war on working people, war on kids. Oh, my goodness. Kids.

I don't know what kids have done. In fact, you know what? Like, we've already got this theme of these guys not liking kids, you know, whether it's cutting their education, attacking their rights in school to be safe, taking away their school lunches, making them pay more to go to school, taking away their wages. But I hadn't really thought about that. It's actually a war on Christmas. Kids like Christmas, too. It's just that whatever kids like, these guys don't, right? I can't wait to see what's next.

Mr. Schmidt: It's going to be in the bill to make Santa Claus illegal.

Ms Notley: Well, maybe. Santa Claus, ironically, probably does work on holidays and is going to get paid a lot less. So kids are going to be sitting on an angry Santa's lap because Santa's making no overtime thanks to these folks. Thank you for that advice, Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. That's actually what's happening here.

Every other part of the country, every other province has rules around holiday pay and premium pay for working on holidays that ensures that you get premium pay for holidays, but now Alberta will not do that. Now Alberta will pay less because of this bill. Every other province will pay more, and Alberta's employers will pay

less. So people who are forced to work on these days get less. That's how it works, right?

Ms Gray: People who don't work.

Ms Notley: People who don't work on these days get less. That's right. Okay. They don't get paid because it's a stat holiday . . .

Ms Gray: Or a Saturday.

Ms Notley: But you don't get paid for it. That's right. So this is a change.

Just to be clear, a stat holiday: the idea is that people get paid for stat holidays, you know. That's what it means, that you get paid for them. That's why so often employers are typically unhappy with the idea of creating new holidays, because they don't want to pay for new holidays. I mean, holidays are bad things according to some.

So just even in '20-21 . . .

Ms Gray: In '21-22.

Ms Notley: In 2021-2022 both Christmas and New Year's are going to fall on a weekend, so that means that people are not going to get paid for that. Now, they did get paid, but now they don't get paid, so that's more money out of their pockets. That's a new thing. That's brought to you by the UCP: no stat holiday pay for Christmas. Jeez, I wonder how that's going to impact the number of presents under the tree, especially when added to the \$2,500 every 12 weeks that someone else in the family is losing. It's going to be one heck of a Grinchy Christmas, I have to say.

I really don't have the slightest idea what possessed people over there to pick such a petty fight with the people of Alberta and to isolate Albertans from the rest of Canada by pulling back on these particular rights. It seems nitpicky, it seems petty, and it obviously is something that is directed, again, against working people, again, part of this overall idea that you create jobs by systematically attacking the rights of working people.

Then, of course, there are other things. We also know, of course, that these folks are very determined to discriminate against young people. You know, I have to say that I find it very interesting. There's this idea that somehow by dropping the youth wage by \$2 an hour, there'll be a plethora of new jobs for people under 18. Of course, there's not one thought given to the people who turn 18 and lose their jobs. If anything, this will be a wash, and there'll be a neutral outcome there.

But, you know, honestly, we know that kids who choose to work before they are 18 typically do so because they need to, and they are contributing to parts of what they want to do, to their education, that kind of thing. I was very pleased. My son started working in grade 10, and he paid for a trip to Quebec to learn French one summer. He did that himself. He contributed to his tuition, and he paid for some of the costs for some of the sports programs, things like that. That's great. Not every kid who is working before they're 18 is using their money that way. Some of them are buying groceries, and some of them are helping pay rent, and some of them are saving to be able to get into university because mom and dad simply do not have the disposable income to pay for their tuition. So these kids are now earning less.

8:50 p.m.

But, more important even, when some of these kids turn 18, what happens is their jobs will just disappear, and they will be replaced by someone who is younger than 18. Because any employer who is

going to actually engage in this discriminatory practice of paying young people \$2 an hour less based on the year they were born in and not based on the way they work or the quality of their work is likely going to be the same kind of person that fires this person when they turn 18 and then goes and finds somebody else, you know, cheaper labour.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Of all the people to impose the obligation to drag this province into economic prosperity upon, let me say that to choose working people under the age of 18 and make them carry the burden is unfair. It's unfair. It's thoughtless. It's very thoughtless. It's going to backfire. It won't work. It's just mean spirited, too. I mean, these are people who can't vote. They didn't vote. They can't vote for this government. They can't cast a ballot. You take powerless people, and you make them the victims of your poorly, poorly thought-out plan to create jobs on the backs of people who earn the least and also need health care and education and school lunches and postsecondary and infrastructure and, you know, firefighters and people to build their roads, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

That is really an obnoxious choice to make, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, in terms of who it is that is going to carry the water of dealing with the fact that for 44 years this government sat on one of the biggest reserves of economic potential and failed to save or to diversify and create an economic model that would carry us more than six months beyond the drop in the price of oil. So for 44 years a bunch of people, many of whom are rather older now, didn't do the job, and now we're going to make people who are 16 pay for their failure. It just really doesn't sit well with me.

Now, another group of people that will be paying for this, of course, is people who serve liquor in restaurants. That's, I think, something that is not in this bill necessarily, but it is the subject of future conversations that have been discussed as part of this overall model of going after working people. I think what we do know is that liquor servers are primarily women and that by cutting their right to a minimum wage, we are disproportionately attacking women and that the majority of people that actually earn this wage, or a large number of them, are actually single parents with children who are women. Again, in an effort to convince their donors that they're going to give them a free ride in some fashion, we are picking people who earn the least and who already earn about 35 cents per dollar less, on average, than men in the province. By all means, let's make it 38 cents or 40 cents. Like, why stop at 35 cents, Mr. Speaker?

If there's a way to have women earn less, let's go at it, and that appears to be what the whole raising of the liquor server differentiation wage is about. That is, again, another decision by this government to make people who have the least carry the water for those who have the most as we struggle with the consequences of 44 years of Conservative failure to diversify our economy and prepare us for the inevitable drop in the price of oil and/or the failure to get our product to market, something that they presided over for 10 years both in Ottawa and Edmonton at the same time.

What else can I say about these things? We've already talked about how we're already out of line with the rest of the country and that somehow people think that by picking on our working people more, somehow this is going to attract investors. I'm wondering. I'm curious, you know. I'd like to ask the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Are those the investors we want to attract? Do we really want the investors who come to Alberta because they get to pay less and they have to respect fewer rights and they can manipulate their employees more in the workplace? Are those the investors we

want? Is that the model of economic growth that we want in this province? I'm just curious.

I had always thought that we could aim higher. It was certainly our view that that's exactly what we had the potential to do in Alberta. We have so many opportunities, so many resources, that we could aim higher, that we could have a vision for our economic future that included everybody doing well and that one of the goalposts to which we would hold ourselves accountable would be the idea that everybody does well, that every kid born into every family has the chance and the likelihood of going to university and has the chance and the likelihood of living a good life where they can spend time with their family and be safe in their workplaces and be innovative and thoughtful and enjoy the arts and culture and live a full life. That's what a good economy is, where everybody enjoys that, not one where we measure it by a profit made by a very small group of people on the backs of a much larger group of people who, quite frankly, struggle to pay the rent every month, who struggle to pay their grocery bills every month, who struggle to save for their kids' education in the future, if that's even a possible thing.

You know, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that there's been a lot of hyperbole in this Chamber about the impact of the carbon tax on regular working people. There's been a tremendous amount of talk around how hard it was for families, low- and middle-income families, to deal with the consequences of the carbon tax even though we repeatedly provided evidence that the rebates we were offering meant that lower income families actually came out of it with more. For middle-income families, it was kind of a wash. But that was certainly part of the narrative. Oh my goodness. The chest-beating that we listened to over the \$200 a month that it might cost a low-income person as a result of the carbon tax. I think that's actually a gross exaggeration. It's more like \$200 over a longer period of time. In any event, that of course never took into account the rebates, which zeroed all that out.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's fine to raise those concerns, but to raise those concerns and then to turn around and take up to \$2,700 every 12 weeks out of the pockets of those very same families that the members opposite claimed for the last four years to be so concerned about is the penultimate example of hypocrisy, Madam Speaker. If you were concerned about the well-being of those people, you wouldn't bring in Bill 2 and attack the well-being of those people. Really, I think the objection to the carbon tax wasn't about the people that these folks claim to be worried about. Well, I actually think it was about political tactics, if you must know. I really think it was about political tactics and not a lot more.

9:00 p.m.

Ms Hoffman: Successful.

Ms Notley: Yeah. Fair enough. It was successful political tactics, but it was actually still political tactics and not much more.

Nonetheless, this bill stands to have a much more significant financial effect on hard-working Albertans, the folks who are getting up in the morning in their older pickup truck and driving 45 minutes or an hour to a construction site and working for 13 hours and then coming home and repeating. These are the folks we heard about who were struggling because of the 6-cent-a-litre increase to the price of gas, but these are the folks who will now lose or could lose over \$2,500 every 12 weeks. I see people shaking their heads over there, but I look forward to rolling out our research that shows that that is exactly the amount of money that people stand to lose by stealing their time and a half and replacing it with straight-time overtime. I guess the issue just comes down to this question. What

exactly are you concerned about over there? You did a heck of a good job of convincing Albertans you were concerned about how hard that extra 6 cents a litre was for families, yet now you're doing this, and this is so much worse. I struggle to add it up, Madam Speaker, because it doesn't make sense. This is far more hurtful.

We've talked about overtime. We have talked about the Christmas holiday, that no longer gets paid to many people. We've talked about undermining unions because we believe the fiction that the average factory-floor employee has the capacity to talk to the owner of the business and individually negotiate their working conditions and how ridiculous that is.

I want to just talk a little bit about the fact that I am still concerned about where this is heading going forward. Originally in the platform of the UCP – and, of course, all of this is linked back to the platform – there was also talk about taking away the ability of unionized workers to participate in public discourse on matters that impacted their working conditions. I see that that's not in this bill, and that's good news. I do want to say that that's good news.

I also want to say, though, that if that is something that people are thinking about bringing back or reintroducing next fall, you know, I think you're going to have a heck of a fight on your hands. I've said quite openly in a speech not too long ago that this idea of cutting services, cutting education, cutting health care, cutting supports to people with disabilities, cutting people who support our seniors, cutting emergency services, cutting the amount of time that police can spend or the number of police, all those kinds of things that happen if you actually do the things that the math that has been presented thus far would suggest are going to be done – and maybe it won't be. Maybe they'll walk away from the math, Madam Speaker. Maybe they'll walk away from their balance date. Maybe they'll walk away from some of their commitments. But if you meet all the commitments that are currently being discussed, then what we will have are cuts to the tune of about 20 per cent over several years, and that will mean a significant attack on services that Albertans rely on.

Certainly, one of the ways we would know about the implications of those attacks is for the working people who provided those services to be able to stand up and tell Albertans what the funding cuts meant, but maybe folks over there think it'll be not as easy for them to tell Albertans about what the funding cuts mean if you take away their ability to speak publicly about these things, as was being mused about before this bill was introduced. I said that it was a bit akin to, you know, someone cutting the phone wires before you break into a house. That is a bit what that would be like if that particular action were taken by this government to limit the free speech rights of those who are parts of unions or members of unions.

I will say that since we don't see it now, I'm going to hope that enough lawyers came in to point out how many ways that would breach the Constitution, that maybe they actually got through to folks, and that particular piece of very ill-advised legislation or policy has been set aside. If it hasn't, then I think that there will be some difficult conversations not only in this Assembly but outside of it. That's all I will say on that at this point.

I think I'm getting close to wrapping up. I want to just finish with this idea that there are things that we agree on in this House, and I started with that. That is that we need to kick-start our economy, and we need to create jobs and we need to protect jobs. We need to protect the jobs that we still have, and we need to find ways to create more jobs. The way to do that in a long-term, sustainable way is to diversify our economy and to attract the kinds of investors who want and need an educated, articulate, enabled, young, innovative, entrepreneurial workforce. Those are the kinds of investors who

will diversify our economy and create the economy of tomorrow, and that will help Alberta capitalize on what are our current assets.

Let me just say for a moment that above and beyond the oil and gas resources that we have, one of the assets that we have in Alberta that we sometimes overlook is that compared even to the rest of the country, we really do have the youngest, best educated, hardest working – and I say that in terms of, like, the number of hours a week that Albertans work – and most diverse workforce in the country. When you sit down and you talk to your colleagues in other parts of the country and you look at what their economic challenges are and you see that their population is literally 10, 15, 20 years older than ours and that the work rate, the productivity rate within their population is very, very low and that large swaths of people aren't working at all and all that kind of stuff, you realize that what we have in Alberta, our biggest asset, really, is our population.

So what we want to do is attract investors who are looking for that. We don't want to attract investors who are looking for the North American version of a developing country, where they can exploit their workforce. That is a dead end to economic development. Slashing our education is a dead end to economic development. Creating massive deficits by giving huge corporate tax giveaways when we already have the lowest taxes in the country is a dead end. Celebrating, raising up, and supporting what is the best workforce in the country: that is part of the path to a long-term, sustainable economic future in this province.

9:10 p.m.

So I would ultimately, as part of this larger picture, urge members opposite to move away from wanting to be the cheapest place to do business in the world model of economic development, because it will fail, because in a race to the bottom we can't compete. What we can compete with is a race to the top because that's who Albertans are. We should have a government that respects that about them, and we should have laws that respect that about Albertans when it comes to our workplaces.

This bill actually reads like a bill that is the opposite of that. This bill reads like a bill that wants to invite investors who will push us to a race for the bottom instead of working with us to win the race to the top, which we have the capacity to do but not if we write off large swaths of our population, create inequality, shut down opportunity, and push people to the side, which is what Bill 2, ultimately, is part of a larger plan to achieve. That is why we are very, very much opposed to it.

With that, although I think I might have another 10 minutes, I think I will bring this . . .

Ms Hoffman: Take nine and a half. Tell us more about union thugs.

Ms Notley: I feel that I've done a good job describing union thugs already, so I'm not going to do that anymore. To be clear, they're not actual, real union thugs.

Oh, I guess the last thing – this is the last thing I will say.

Ms Hoffman: There we go.

Ms Notley: There she goes. Okay.

The one thing I was going to say when I was talking about the hypothetical, fictional union thug, that was, you know, six foot eight and 300 pounds, is that, actually, I am the union thug because I worked for the union. I'm sure most people here will say that I'm not that intimidating, and it's very unlikely that I could march onto a factory floor and intimidate some fellow there into signing a union card that he didn't want to sign. Unions are actually working people, and they look like the working people who are their

members. They are not thugs, and they're not intimidating; they're simply working people coming together to support each other.

Anyway, that's sort of a digression because I thought that I was actually getting very close to wrapping up with a nice conclusion. Thanks to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I have now broken that. Nonetheless, I guess I will just end with that little anecdote. My apologies for the lack of organization in the last hour of comments, but I do hope I've been able to reach and touch on most of the points that are relevant to why our caucus is absolutely and completely opposed to Bill 2. We think it represents a step towards the wrong future, the utterly wrong choice for how we grow this province. It is the opposite of what we should be doing, and it is something that in the long term will hurt the economy of the province, not help it, and in the short term it will hurt working people who are already struggling and don't need this government to pile on any more in the struggle that they have.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat and cede the floor to others who, I'm sure, have many things to say about Bill 2. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for making it through 85 minutes of that diatribe. Unenlightening, at best. To be honest with you, I've heard a lot of things in my short time in this Legislature, but I have rarely heard the level of disrespect that I just heard over the last 85 minutes, particularly regarding the small-business owners who bust their hump every day to create wealth in this province and create jobs.

The members opposite have begun to show us their true colours. Last night the House leader said that if small businesses can't absorb a couple of thousand dollars, maybe they should revise their business model. Now, maybe there are a couple of companies, maybe there are lots of companies in this province that could absorb a couple of thousand dollars, but I can tell you that there are countless others for which that couple of thousand dollars makes a colossal difference between paying your employees, paying your debts, and maybe having a bit of money left over to pay yourself at the end of the month.

Then, all of a sudden we have the former Premier suggesting that success or relative success enjoyed by business leaders was luck – was luck. I cannot believe that came from that member's mouth. I'll tell you that luck does not get you up at 5 o'clock in the morning. Luck doesn't get you an excellent grade on your exam. Luck didn't help that member across graduate from law school. Luck doesn't pay off your line of credit, and it sure doesn't pay off your bank loan.

I implore the member opposite to take a trip down to my home constituency and walk the streets of Cardston and go from business to business to business and ask them how they got to where they are. Ask them where they are now, where they've been in the last four years, and what the projections were looking like if the members opposite were re-elected. I implore the member opposite to please go down to Cardston and visit those business owners and tell them to their faces that the success that they enjoy or what they may call success was luck.

An Hon. Member: We never said that.

Mr. Schow: Indeed, the member opposite did suggest that it was luck, by chance.

Well, I'll tell you what chance was. Chance is what happened four years ago on May 5, 2015. I'll tell you what. For the members

opposite 604,000 voters cast a ballot for them, but a combined between the PC and Wildrose legacy parties was 774,000 and change. The luck: accidental government that became a colossal mistake, frankly, for this province. We're grateful it is over. But I will tell you that luck is not what got Alberta to where it is today. Luck doesn't break the ground. Luck doesn't get our products to market. Luck doesn't get you up in the morning, and it sure as heck doesn't pay your bills.

This idea, as the member opposite suggested, that these business owners are getting to where they are by suppressing the workers, suppressing their wages, and, as the member opposite said, putting their heels on the necks of the workers is nothing short of absurd. It's a terrible figure.

Madam Speaker, I make a request to the member opposite to apologize to Albertans for the insinuation that it is luck that got us here today, luck that has created Alberta. It is not luck. It is hard work. It is dedication. It is commitment to family. It is commitment to success. That is not luck. Albertans at home, if they're watching this – I pray they're watching the basketball game, not this, because that 85 minutes was certainly less entertaining than, I'm certain, the basketball game was. But I will tell you, she needs . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much. I'd like to begin by pointing out to the Member for Cardston-Siksika that the Leader of the Opposition did not say the things that you implied she said. You're not listening.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member.

Member Ceci: Yes. I'll talk to you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, if I just may. Just please have a seat.

I think this is a really great time for everyone on all sides of the House to remember that we do speak through the chair. I understand that there's a lot of passion entering this room, which is fine, but let's maybe direct your anger this way instead of across the aisle.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

9:20 p.m.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much. The Leader of the Opposition, I know, did not say the things that the Member for Cardston-Siksika implied she said for five minutes. She didn't say them. He – that person; sorry . . .

Ms Hoffman: You can say "he."

Member Ceci: . . . heard something because he wanted to hear it. It wasn't said by this person.

I'll just begin by saying that I enjoyed the Leader of the Opposition's critique of the grand plan for job creation, which I believe, like this person, the leader, does, is wrong-headed and is bound to fail, not unlike the report today that talked about President Trump's \$1 trillion tax giveaway, that is not returning what he said would be returned to Americans; namely, jobs and growth in the economy. It is folly in that case – the Americans bought it – and it's the same thing with Alberta today.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the magical thinking that if you grow inequality and make it more difficult for people to get ahead who are at the lower end of the wage scale, if you take their rights away – I hope the Member for Cardston-Siksika is listening because I'm not saying anything other than what is

happening in this province right now with this Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill – if you make it more difficult for them to unionize, if you make it more difficult for them to save money, then what you are really doing is creating an environment where the clock is being turned back in terms of rights of people, of employees in this province.

When Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, was created, in 2017, it was created by this side, the NDP of Alberta. It was created after previous governments in 2007 and 2014 reviewed the code on two different occasions, seven years apart, and did nothing. And did nothing. I can remember those times because what would often happen with those governments was that they would review, and then they would send up trial balloons. They would essentially take the temperature of Albertans, and the loudest Albertans in those cases were the ones who didn't want to see change in this province. It wasn't workers who had the loudest voices, Madam Speaker.

Alberta had some of the oldest workplace legislation in Canada. Prior to our government's changes, both the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code had not been significantly changed in 30 years. I can remember, time and time again, where the minister of labour and democratic renewal would stand up, stand over there, and say: we are doing these changes because 30 years ago what was popular was the movie *Shaft*.

Ms Gray: *Die Hard*.

Member Ceci: *Die Hard*. Sorry. It was the movie *Die Hard*. That was popular 30 years ago.

The minister of labour and democratic renewal would use that as a bit of a prop. She wouldn't say anything against employers. She wouldn't talk about small business at all. She would say: look, things haven't changed in this province since *Die Hard* was in the movie theatres.

Ms Gray: A Christmas classic.

Member Ceci: A Christmas classic. That's right.

The previous governments, in 2007 and 2014, essentially would lead people on by looking at changes and then not doing anything. We took a focused review on changes to the code and brought in the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. It focused the review on existing laws. Madam Speaker, over 7,300 submissions from businesses, industry, organized labour, academics, municipalities, nonprofits, and the general public were received. It was comprehensive, and there was a series of changes that were part of Bill 17.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about one part of the current pick-your-pockets bill because one of the many things that we did was repeal the ability for employers to pay employees less than the minimum wage. We had a series of steps to get the minimum wage up to \$15. I think it was October 1, 2018, when it went to \$15. Also, there was an ability for employers to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage in the previous code. We eliminated that. I think everybody would agree that it's not appropriate to pay people with disabilities any less than the minimum wage, but that was entrenched in the previous code by the previous government. We got rid of that, and we made all wages the same for all people. Equal pay for work of equal value.

I just want to talk about my first experience with equal pay for work of equal value. I grew up in southern Ontario, Madam Speaker, and in southern Ontario there are a number of family farms. Farming is really big in southern Ontario. The cash crop, the one that I worked in, was tobacco. My parents grew up on tobacco farms. My mother got married off the farm. Her whole life before

she got married and went to the city was as a worker on a farm. My father's family, similarly, had tobacco and other mixed crops. They went to the city before my mother's family, but, you know, we grew up as young kids in the family always going to the farm to work summers.

I can remember the time I went to be a primer. That's a tobacco picker in the fields. It's back-breaking work, Madam Speaker, from sun-up to sundown. Stompin' Tom Connors said, you know: my back hurts every time I hear the word Tillsonburg. He was an itinerant worker on tobacco farms as well for a portion of his time. He got out, and we all know what Stompin' Tom did for this country, but before he was famous, he worked tobacco.

Tobacco had one wage in the field, not one wage for young people and one wage for people over 18. When I was far younger than 18, I was in the fields, and we were paid \$50 a day. Every worker in the fields was paid \$50. It seemed like a tremendous amount of money, Madam Speaker, years ago, when I was 15, 16, 17, 18. I knew that the other workers were getting the same amount of money. There was no difference because we all did the same work.

The lesson I would have learned had I got less than the person right beside me, who was over 18, is: you can work as hard as them, but you're not going to get compensated. That would have been the wrong lesson to teach a young person, Madam Speaker, and that's what the pick-your-pockets bill does. Through no fault other than their age, they're going to get paid less. Like them, I back then used that money to save up for my future. Telling those young people today, with the pick-your-pockets bill, "You're worth less; you'll not have the ability to save as much as the person beside you who may be more than 18," it might influence their ability to want to work as hard as that person beside them. They're going to get paid less, but they're going to be asked to do the same work. It defies logic, Madam Speaker. If we have a minimum wage, that's what people should get paid minimally, not people with disabilities getting paid less though that was in the previous government's actions, not if you're less than 18, you should get paid less, because we all are working hard. Albertans work hard.

9:30 p.m.

The Leader of the Opposition talked at length about the workforce in this province. I agree wholeheartedly, and I think that side would agree as well. We're younger than the rest of the country, maybe not me but the rest of the workforce are younger on average. I think they're in the 40s, low 40s. The only people younger in this country are people in the territories. They're a younger group of people than Albertans, but their numbers are very small compared to the millions in this province that work.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We're more educated than the rest of the country, Mr. Speaker, and that's because of our quality education system. Right from primary all up to secondary school, postsecondary school, colleges, trade schools, we're more educated in this province. But, you know, with the bill . . .

Ms Hoffman: Pick-your-pockets bill.

Member Ceci: Pick-your-pockets bill is Bill 2, but Bill 3 is the give money away to corporations bill, with a \$4.5 billion tax cut to corporations. Mr. Speaker, it won't be too long before our education system is going to suffer, and the people will suffer in this province. It won't be too long before we can't call ourselves one of the best educated workforces in the country.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about us being more entrepreneurial. Well, we know that to be true. The number of jobs in business start-ups in this province outweigh many, many, many other provinces. You know, we punch higher than our weight in that area as well. Hardest working. What we mean by that is the number of hours. Longer number of hours put in by Albertans than the rest of the country. More diverse. Our workforce is more diverse, Mr. Speaker. That's true, too, because we're getting more diverse. We're about 30, 40 per cent people of colour and diverse backgrounds in this province now, where we never were before. That's an advantage for employers in this province and who will be attracted here. We're more productive.

Those are the things that I know about Albertans. Those are the things that I think will suffer as a result of a pick-your-pockets bill like we're looking at today. Those are the things that won't encourage people to do more and to do better.

After coming out here, Mr. Speaker, I put about 20 years in as a social worker in a variety of places. I know there are some members of the Legislature here, both on this side and that side, who worked in that profession as well. This bill takes money out of the pockets of young people who are struggling to make their lives better. The east end of Calgary: I know the Member for Calgary-Cross comes from the east end. His father was the Member for Calgary-East for a long time. It's an area of the city that struggles, and the young people in that area of the city have to go to work at an earlier age to support families.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I feel like we may need a game of paper, rock, scissors here to determine who was on their feet first, but I will cede to the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise on 29(2)(a). Thank you to the hon. member for his comments. I'd like to focus on just one area of it because of the little time that we have to be able to speak on this important issue. I was interested in some of the comments where the hon. member, a former Finance minister not too long ago, spent his time focusing on the fact that, essentially, Albertans, over a million of them who voted for the United Conservative Party, who raised concerns during the mandate of his then government, were being loud and were yelling and were somehow not with the majority of Albertans. And just that the reason that they were able to articulate and ultimately influence – I guess his argument was that the United Conservative Party would go on to become government just because they were louder than everybody else.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that it's actually completely different. I think most of those people were the silent majority that were extremely frustrated with the behaviour of the NDP when they were in government, particularly with that Finance minister, who oversaw – was it six credit downgrades under his mandate? At least five. He completely ignored the people. I feel obligated on behalf of my constituents, who were very frustrated with the former Finance minister and his party, to speak tonight, to say that it wasn't because they were yelling and being obnoxious; it's because they were expressing their concerns often calmly and, you know, sometimes passionately, certainly, but very respectfully.

I mean, it started off, of course, when the NDP came into power, with thousands of farmers and ranchers piling onto the stairs and around the fountains outside to protest what was pretty much abuse of the legislative process without consulting them. I know that the former Premier mocks them still. They were right there, Mr. Speaker, right in this House. It's not appropriate.

Maybe he's referring to the people who – this past year, just after Christmas, I believe December 29, in Rocky Mountain House I had some young people call me, and they wanted to organize a rally to protest and to stand up against how they felt the NDP were treating them. I thought that to do that between Christmas and New Year's, they would not have much of a turnout, but I was willing to do it. Much to my surprise when I arrived on the 29th, the parking lots were full, and well over a thousand people came out between Christmas and New Year's in small town Rocky Mountain House to say that that town was not going to put up anymore with what this government had done. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would say that Rocky Mountain House, which has been a town since 1799, one of the oldest communities in this country and certainly in western Canada, has every right to come out and say that they have a problem with how this former government was treating them.

But what you're seeing tonight, again, over and over, Mr. Speaker, is the NDP, particularly led by their leader, who can't accept the fact that Albertans cast judgment on her and her party's behaviour when they were on this side of the House. They continue to want to relive that election. Well, the election results are clear. The NDP's policies have been outright rejected by the people of Alberta. Their government was a failure, they failed Albertans, and all they can do now is sit inside this Assembly and spend time insulting job creators or insulting the people that spoke out against them, insulting farmers and ranchers who came and complained about legislation being forced on them without their consultation, insulting fixed-income seniors who complained that they were having trouble paying their heating bill when they brought in a carbon tax. That's all that they can do.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, they go as far as to basically question the results of our democracy that spoke loud and clear on April 16. When I sat in that same chair that the current Leader of the Official Opposition sits in, I warned them that this would happen. But they haven't learned their lesson. They have not learned their lesson. That's why we see – and I'm shocked. I thought that there would be a little bit of humbleness that would come from the NDP. I mean, being the only party that was able to form government in this province that would go on to lose after one term. One term: that's the legacy of the now Leader of the Official Opposition and her party. A one-term government because they didn't listen to the people of Alberta, because they sat on this side of the aisle and even insulted them, calling them names like sewer rats and Chicken Little and those types of things. It's a shame they have not learned their lesson.

The Speaker: There's approximately one second left in 29(2)(a). I see the Government House Leader has risen. Has he spoken to second reading?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Speaking on the bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: On the main bill.

9:40 p.m.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity now to speak on the main bill. I think that we're pretty close to moving on to a different topic for the night, but I just will close my thoughts on 29(2)(a), which is ... [interjection] Right there you are seeing tonight, Mr. Speaker, inside the Legislature the NDP government continuing not to accept the results – the NDP opposition. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. That muscle memory gets you.

That NDP opposition is continuing to refuse to accept the results of the election, which is fine. They can do that. But they should stop standing inside this House and questioning what Albertans decided

on April 16. Albertans are the ones who decided that they should not be government anymore. Albertans are the ones who decided that their policies were not acceptable to them. Albertans fired them on April 16. That was the decision of this province. I certainly know, Mr. Speaker, that I was in a big hurry to come and vote to fire them as well. But, ultimately, that was a decision by Albertans.

With that said and with that thought on everybody's mind, I will now move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Members, I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 3 Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Obviously, I guess we're going to discuss corporate tax cuts and the reason why the members opposite keep saying that it's going to do things that legislation clearly hasn't done at times where other jurisdictions have attempted this. We've seen case study after case study. I've mentioned some of them in second reading. In jurisdictions, primarily in the United States, where individuals attempted to campaign on these big corporate tax cuts magically leading to better jobs or more jobs, certainly that wasn't the evidence that has been contributed from these experiments in reducing corporate taxes and bringing about further opportunities for shareholders – I wouldn't even say shareholders. I'd say for profitable corporations to maximize their profits – that's what I would say – at the expense of things that the public purse would use that money for, like health care and education and jobs and bridges and communities.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I think we heard our critic for Transportation speak earlier today about the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan, a long-needed capital project for that community, and we heard the Minister of Transportation say not much. We heard the Minister of Transportation maybe say: "Yeah. It's an important project. But there's lots of pressure. So who knows? Time will tell. We'll make up our mind later."

Well, I'll tell you, though, that the folks that I talked to in Fort Saskatchewan and I imagine the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has talked to, they can't wait. They think that this is an important project for their safety and their well-being, the economic security of the region. There are certainly a lot of folks who take that bridge every day to and from work. There's a lot of heavy equipment that takes that bridge on a regular basis, I believe, as well. And they say: "Stay tuned. Wait. We don't have time to make a decision about whether or not we're going to keep this bridge as a high priority and it'll be funded or whether or not we will cancel it altogether. But we do have time to say that we will cut corporate taxes by \$4.5 billion. We'll blow a hole in the revenues of the province. That we will decide today."

We also asked questions earlier in the day during question period about school nutrition programs. Schools across this

province are of course planning for the upcoming fall. They usually have done all of their staffing determinations by this point in the school year or most of them at least. They're trying to decide if they will be hiring lunch men and women, people to help support those school nutrition programs. They have had no inkling from this government whether or not that project will continue. They're assuming that it won't. When you hear nothing, it probably means that. So they are making the decisions to cut back on staff, cut back on things to feed hungry children. I asked the question in question period today: is feeding hungry children a priority for this government? Again we heard nothing. What we are hearing is that a \$4.5 billion hole in the revenues of this province is a priority. It must move forward today because we don't have \$33 million to feed hungry kids.

Well, Mr. Chair, when things like this are brought forward by the government, it really does speak to what some of their priorities are. They are creating an environment where they will say to their caucus: "You know, we made the decision to cut corporate taxes. We did that together. We made this decision together. We all decided we were going to do this. We voted on it. We're going to have not just the lowest because we have almost the lowest right now. We are only .5 per cent higher than the next lowest jurisdiction in the country. It's not that we're wanting to be the lowest. We are wanting to be by far, far, far the lowest. The next lowest would be Ontario at 11.5 per cent. We want to be 8 per cent. That's going to be the thing that gets us over the finish line." Well, you know what? I would say that if they wanted to tinker with them, if they wanted to be tied for the lowest in the country, that certainly would blow a much smaller hole in the finances for this province, a much smaller hole that would enable things like the Fort Saskatchewan bridge or things like the transit project right now that's under way between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge to move forward.

I know that those voices aren't sitting around the cabinet table when bills like this are drafted. But those voices are around the caucus table, and the people who live in those regions matter. They deserve to have an opportunity to have their projects funded as well, to make sure that many seniors who travel between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge have the opportunity to do that without putting themselves at risk or their families at risk or without having to spend hundreds of dollars to be able to go see the cardiac specialist who's in Lethbridge if you live in Medicine Hat.

These are the kinds of initiatives that you're being asked today to make a decision on. Rather than laying all of the money out on the table and involving the whole caucus in setting what the priorities are, our Premier, Mr. Chair, is putting forward a suite of legislation that sets out conditions that will inevitably lead to significant cuts to services, particularly in regional communities. For example, this \$4.5 billion tax cut: another area where some folks who were in the opposition previously, who now sit among private members in the caucus, said regularly that they really wanted to see an investment – or not an investment. They wanted to make sure that the local laundry services that we have in rural communities become privatized and centralized into large urban centres.

9:50 p.m.

Well, these are the kinds of things that will inevitably happen when you blow this kind of a hole: "Of course, we can't afford to wash sheets. Of course, we can't afford to pay the local people who work in our community, in our hospital. We'll have to privatize that and send those jobs to Edmonton and Calgary. Well, most of our caucus represents those communities where those jobs will be moving to, so maybe we shouldn't be so outraged and upset."

But, Mr. Chair, many of us have ties to other parts of this province as well. When I think about the hard-working men and

women in hospitals in High Prairie, for example, or in Hinton, for example, who deserve to have those jobs in their communities be supported in the long term and keep those jobs, those services, and that laundry close by – some people may think: laundry, it's not such a big deal. Well, you know what? My grandma spent a reasonable amount of time in the hospital towards the end of her life, and on more than one occasion she lost her hearing aid. It was usually in the sheets. If those sheets weren't in the hospital that she was in, how would we ever get that hearing aid back? We probably wouldn't.

So it definitely has an impact on patient care and families. I can tell you that those times that she lost the hearing aid were very stressful for all of us, even if it was for just a very short period of time, because we had to find a way to get it back and to communicate with her. If we still lived in Kinuso and we had to drive the three hours to get to Edmonton to find where the laundry facility was and to try to get back the hearing aid, that would have had a significant detrimental effect on my grandmother and certainly on our family as well, our nuclear family.

I have to say that when we're asked to make decisions here – is it the second or the third week of this sitting? It's not long into the job to be making significant financial decisions that will have major impacts on the projects that many members of this House are advocating for. I've heard many private members' questions about important projects in their own ridings. I have to say: good on you for fighting for your riding. But by making this decision today, Mr. Chair, a number of conditions will be put in place where you simply can't continue to advocate for these kinds of projects because there simply won't be the money that's needed to make these investments in your local communities.

I really hope that constituents don't end up sitting on the highway for hours trying to chase the laundry down the highway to go get the things that are needed to keep their family members safe. I really hope that the laundry workers in Medicine Hat, who I met with last summer, have their jobs in six months. I really do because I think that is important work, and I think that having those jobs in local communities helps our province be vibrant.

I think it was Premier Lougheed who I believe talked about – I'm going to paraphrase. If I get it wrong, I'm sure somebody can help me under 29(2)(a). Part of why he built so many hospitals in rural communities is that he wanted to create an Alberta where it wasn't just the two big cities that held all the opportunities for people to work and engage in the public sector and the services that come with that. He wanted to have lots of communities like Hinton and Stettler and Medicine Hat. Small and mid-size cities I think he thought were the model for the future. I know many members in this House, many members particularly in the caucus rather than in the cabinet, represent those communities. I think it's important that they have an opportunity to benefit from our shared wealth as a province.

Mr. Chair, we're being asked as a Chamber to make a decision that, I would say, is going to have far-reaching impacts, and the rationale that's given is that it's going to create jobs, but all the research shows that it will not create jobs. All the research shows that it will actually – in other jurisdictions where employment went up far greater, jurisdictions that took this strategy saw either flat growth or very modest growth compared to their neighbouring jurisdictions that maintained tax rates.

Again, AT&T promised to create 7,000 new jobs under a Trump tax cut. What did they do? They cut 23,000. That's a significant difference between what was promised and what was delivered. Kansas, of course, passed into law one of the world's biggest, the state's biggest for sure and probably among the world's biggest,

single tax cuts. It was supposed to be a real live experiment. Well, it sure was an experiment, and it sure did fail, Mr. Chair.

It's important, I think, to think about what conditions are being set up through this bill. I've mentioned earlier in debate getting time on that cabinet agenda to bring something back because people will probably say: "Well, we're passing this today; it doesn't mean that it needs to be this forever. We can always bring it back." But I'll tell you that getting time on that cabinet agenda when all private members, all cabinet ministers have things they would like to get through – I'm sure that you've been lobbied by many members of your community to make sure that you push initiatives that are important to them. I wonder how many people, when they were door-knocking, had voters say to them: you know, it's really important to me that we cut \$4.5 billion from the corporate tax rate. I didn't hear that.

I did hear people say: it's really important to me that we have good jobs, that we diversify our economy, that we make sure that we support and continue to advocate in all ways possible to get access to tidewater. It's been far too long since we've gotten a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater. I think it's 60 years. Again, if I'm off by five or 10, somebody can correct me. I remember thinking that it was almost the length of time that our oldest caucus member had been alive since we got a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater. It definitely wasn't the length of time in excess that the former, former government was in. The PC government didn't get a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater. It certainly was in excess of 44 years plus four for us. That's what I'm trying to say.

I know that it's important for us to make sure that we continue to stimulate the economy, that we continue to support a diversified economy. I assert that the research shows that these kinds of short-sighted, ideological decisions that aren't grounded in evidence will do the opposite, and it will actually hurt everyone's ability to lobby for their individual communities and the projects that are important in their own ridings. I know that there are many communities that are nervous about the future of their local school or their local hospital. I have to say that decisions like this drive those kinds of nervous decisions down the road. I get it.

But the truth is that we don't need to make this decision today. We don't need to rush into making a decision to blow a \$4.5 billion hole in our province's revenues. It's up to us when and how we proceed with these things and what information we use to help make these decisions. Whether it's the bridge in Peace River or the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan or the transit path between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge or the dialysis that we are expanding in many communities, particularly in the north, that have incredibly high rates of diabetes and needs for increased dialysis services, these are all decisions that will be influenced by the conditions that we set out for ourselves at the beginning of our term here.

This is what we are engaging in at this very moment, making these decisions about what kind of conditions, what assumptions we want down the road. If you take a symbolic logic course – you know, if A, then B. So if A is that we cut out \$4.5 billion, then it limits some of our opportunities down the road because we've started making that initial decision about which path we want to go forward on. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe members opposite will tell me that they heard that this was the number one issue at every single door they knocked. If they did, I would love to know that. This definitely wasn't the number one issue that I heard at every single door. I had many people talk to me about supporting a diversified economy and good jobs and good schools and good health care, and I imagine that many of those messages are probably the same.

Certainly, our pipeline access was a big one. If we're going to make decisions to have big Canada-wide campaigns – and I definitely know that this project is in the Canadian interest. That's one of the reasons why I supported the Keep Canada Working campaign, and I know there's a new iteration of that now under the new Premier. But if the actual goal is to spend money on things like a national ad campaign and to cut \$4.5 billion from corporate taxes, that definitely blows a big hole in revenues that can be used in other ways to support projects that are important to all members and the constituents that we are charged to represent.

I think that this is something that we don't need to rush into. I think that the fact that we made the rushed decision to even change the order of debate tonight to get to this point and then tried to call the question before members had an opportunity to fully engage in this speaks to the fact that there are many people in the cabinet that probably want to get this done with. They want to pretend that this debate never happened. It was a quick and easy decision, and then the caucus can get on with doing the tough work about deciding which schools and hospitals in their own ridings will close. I don't think that's fair. I think it's important that all members of both caucuses have an opportunity to consider what the real ramifications are of things like blowing a \$4.5 billion hole in revenues and what implications that would have to their local communities.

10:00 p.m.

I also want to say that we are not alone in this opinion. In Canada there was a B.C. tax cut. They cut corporate taxes from 16.5 per cent in 2000 to 13.5 and then down to 10 per cent. The impact on the bottom line: while politicians said that the cut would pay for itself, between \$8 billion and \$10 billion, it certainly did no such thing. During the same period the province's debt doubled.

I do know that many people in this House care deeply about debt and deficit, and I do, too. I also care about making sure that we have a stable public service, particularly health care and education. If you care about those things, too, and you don't want to increase the debt, don't duplicate the decisions, Mr. Chair, that were made in B.C. that showed that it actually moved things backwards, not forwards, on that goal. B.C. politicians were claiming that the tax cuts would pay for themselves, but a decade of tax cuts has proven few savings for most families while out-of-pocket user fees for public services have risen significantly, fees for things like taking the ferries, the toll bridges in British Columbia – I know many of you have probably been on those toll bridges – or the toll highways.

These are things that I know the now Premier didn't rule out during the election campaign, but I hope that many of you have had a chance to think about how these things would impact the families that you represent and the workers and the employers, too. When I think about how busy that bridge in Fort Saskatchewan is, for example, with industrial traffic, if that was a toll bridge rather than a bridge built with part of this \$4.5 billion, I think it would have a negative impact on that part of the Industrial Heartland and the work that happens in that part of our province.

If we increased tolls in places like the provincial parks and park user fees, I know that would have a negative impact on families. I know that when then Premier Prentice brought in his budget, there were a number of user fees that went up in a number of things. There was a proposed health care levy, a health care levy that hit every single family. These are the kinds of things that we can avoid if we are a little bit more thoughtful and take our time to make a decision about how we want to divide up the resources that we have as a province. Making these massive tax bill decisions without seeing a budget is setting that budget up for certain failure.

In dollar terms, in the past decade lower income households received an average tax cut of a couple of hundred dollars per year, the middle benefited from a tax cut of \$1,200, and the top 10 per cent pocketed an average of \$9,000 per year. That, again, was B.C. households. How did that create income opportunities for all? I would argue that it didn't. I would argue that a government that thinks about our most vulnerable, that thinks about those seniors living in our long-term care facilities or, even worse, the ones who are waiting for long-term care facilities or about the families that have children living in poverty and develops a strategy to help get them out of poverty – it's something that would benefit all of us in this House, to have conversations about those in the context of the overall budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Minister of Transportation standing to speak.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Listen, I've listened to the debate that we just heard here, and I have to say that it left me with more notes than I actually have room for on my desk, almost. I heard comments about: don't duplicate the decisions of B.C. What we don't want to do is duplicate the decisions of the NDP government that just got removed from office after one term.

The honest answer won't be very nice for the opposition to hear. The number one issue I heard at the doors was: "Get rid of the NDP. I don't care what else you do. Make them go. My family is worse. All the people I know, lots of people I know haven't got a job, and they used to have a job. Our kids used to be planning on staying in Alberta; now they're planning on leaving. For goodness' sake, make these people go." That was the number one issue I heard at the doors. That's all they needed. That's all they told me. That was the number one thing. Mr. Chair, I don't think we're going to take a lot of economic advice from the folks across the aisle because, frankly, their policies failed miserably. They failed miserably.

Mr. Chair, actually, I've been waiting for a little while to talk about this. They always talk about the cuts for their rich corporate friends. Corporations: let's talk about corporations for a minute. I'll tell you who corporations are. Corporations are the place where you got your latte this morning. Corporations are the place where you got your ordinary coffee this morning. Corporations are flower shops, grocery stores, gas stations. They're the job creators. They're the people, in many cases, that make the least money of anybody. They've bought themselves, in many cases, a job, and they work that job for, in many cases, less than the minimum wage, whether it's \$13 or \$15 an hour, because they want to row their own boat. They want to be self-reliant.

Yes, they all have dreams of being multimillionaires. Of course they do. We all do. But the fact is that many of them slave away morning, noon, and night for very low wages, and while they're doing that, they probably, in many cases, put the only thing they own in the world that's worth anything, their home, at risk, where the bank has a line on their home if their business fails. These are the people that the NDP complains about with "giving tax breaks to the rich." These are the people that they're complaining about giving tax breaks to, the people that have put their house at risk to buy a coffee shop. These people across the aisle are complaining because we want them to succeed and create more jobs and to be able to retire decently.

That's what the NDP is complaining about when they complain about rich corporate friends. They're complaining about the person that served them coffee this morning. They are complaining about the person that took their money at the gas station. [interjections] They're talking about the person that answered the phone at the

flower shop on Mother's Day, who took their order. Those are the rich corporate fat cats that the NDP loves to complain about in this House. They're people, Albertans. They're the heart and soul of this province, the heart and soul of Canada, and they're the ones that the NDP loves to make fun of, Mr. Chair. [interjections] Those are the ones that we want to help to succeed with this bill. They're the ones that we want less money going – I love it. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo was talking, so thank you for that, hon. member.

You reminded me of something else I want to talk about. I heard him talking earlier tonight about working in the tobacco fields. It's something the hon. member and I have in common. He's proud of it; I'm proud of it. We don't agree on much, but I think we'd agree that that's honourable work and it's hard work. Where I disagree with the hon. member is that that is work that is based very much on performance. It's not minimum-wage work, Mr. Chair. I'll tell you what, when you fall behind in the tobacco fields, you're fired, because the machine goes at a pace. That's why Stompin' Tom Connors wrote that song. It wasn't a minimum-wage job. It was a job where you get on a machine, it goes back by so many plants per hour, and if you don't get the leaves off those plants and put them in the basket between your legs, though your back hurts, then you're out of the chair and somebody else is in the chair. It's not a minimum-wage job.

That's why we need a minimum-wage job where they can actually train people. People typically don't start off at high speed, at top speed in that business and in a lot of businesses. We need a place for people to learn their trades, a place for people to actually get on the first rung of the economic ladder, which is the minimum wage, and work their way up. You know who they're working for in many cases? Corporations. When they're flipping burgers – it doesn't matter which burger chain you talk about or whether it's an independent – there's a very high probability that it's a corporation and a very high chance that the person that owns that corporation has a mortgage on their house or the bank has a line on their house to finance that corporation.

That's what the opposition, the NDP, calls greedy Albertans. That's what I call job creators. That's what our side of the House calls the heart and soul of Alberta. That's what our side of the House calls what is going to create the jobs and the opportunities and the future of this province, because people put themselves out there. [interjections] We don't talk them down; we talk them up because that's what Alberta is about. I know the Member for Calgary-Buffalo just can't stop chirping right now, because he's, or he should be, embarrassed by what he's hearing.

You know what? The corporate tax rates that you're complaining about: we saw Murphy Oil, Total, and a myriad of other oil companies leave this province, and what went with them? Eighty billion dollars of investment. What went with them? Tens and hundreds of thousands of jobs, families without a paycheque. That's what the NDP stands for. That's why when I knocked on the doors, people said, the number one reason: "I don't care. Just get rid of the NDP. I'd vote for anybody as long as I believe they can get rid of that government, that has hurt my family, that has hurt my neighbour's family, that has lowered the value on the biggest investment that I have, the home that you just knocked on the front door of. It's worth \$100,000 or \$200,000 less than it was on May 5, 2005, when Albertans elected the NDP government." That was the number one issue at the doors.

10:10 p.m.

Member Ceci: In 2005?

Mr. McIver: In 2005.

Member Ceci: In 2015.

Mr. McIver: In 2015. Thank you. See, I do agree on some things with the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. It doesn't happen often, but that was one right there, and I'll give him full credit for that.

Mr. Chair, when I was growing up, my dad was a welder at Massey-Ferguson in Brantford, Ontario, and he used to refer to himself as a working stiff. He used to say: "With seven kids we can't go anywhere, but the corporation can. We really need them to stay." His career ended when the corporation left. He used to say: "You know what? They just need to call their lawyer, call their accountant, push a button on their computer, and the corporation can go. But not me; I'm a working stiff." That's why we need to make businesses welcome here, because they provide jobs and opportunity and they pay taxes.

Now, what's really interesting about that, too, Mr. Chair, along the same lines, which is why this bill is so important – they want to talk about logic. I'll tell you what logic is. Logic is: the NDP raised corporate taxes by 20 per cent and collected less money. Think about that. They raised their prices by 20 per cent and collected less money. In other words, by logic, the obvious logical thing to correct the damage that the NDP did would be to lower those corporate taxes to collect more money and attract more businesses. Not only did they collect less corporate money; the corporations left. That's part of the reason why they left and they collected less money. They collected less money because the corporations were making less money.

You know what you tax? You tax profits. The NDP doesn't like profits. They love the money that comes from profits, but they hate the profits. How weird is that? Talk about – what's the word that the hon. member used? – symbolic logic. The logic follows that if you want profits from corporations, you actually need to let the corporations make money so you can tax the profits, yet they don't seem to connect those dots. Mr. Chair, on this side of the House we connect those dots.

In fact, Mr. Chair, part of the reason why they collected less money is because corporations have other abilities that working stiff don't have, and I say that with the most respect about calling them working stiff because that's what my dad called himself. Corporations can choose where they pay taxes. If you have a corporation with an office in every province in Canada, you have a choice where you pay taxes. Many of them used to choose to pay their taxes in Alberta. They were, like, at least economically, probably the best citizens we had because they didn't use any health care. The ones that just had a desk and a phone and paid their taxes: they didn't use any health care, they didn't use the justice system, they didn't use the education system, yet they chose to pay their taxes here. You know what? They're not paying their taxes here anymore because the NDP made this place uncompetitive, and they're all paying their taxes somewhere else now.

We need to actually attract some of them back. We need to attract the taxes back that they pay. We need to attract the jobs that they provide for Albertans, the mortgage-paying jobs, Mr. Chair, and this government is standing on their feet flailing and arguing against the economic prosperity and success of Alberta, and I'm sick of it.

Fortunately for me, Albertans are sick of it. Fortunately for me and for all of us, Albertans made a decision on April 16, and they said: enough. They went with the number one issue that I heard at the doors: just get rid of the NDP because it's making everybody's life worse. And they said: "We're just hoping that you're different than them. We're hoping that you're great, but you only have to be average to do better than what we've had in the last four years." We're going to try to be great, Mr. Chair, but if we're only average, it'll be an improvement, which is why I support this bill.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora would like to speak.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. If average was what the member was hoping for, he's about a third of the way below that, because I'll reiterate that the corporate tax rates – again, these are for corporations that make more than \$500,000 a year in net profits. This isn't about a small business that is paying out their own salary at a very small rate. This is about corporations that are making more than \$500,000 a year in net profits, right? This is about that tax rate.

With regard to the small-business tax rate our government made the choice to reduce small-business taxes by a third. We cut them from 3 to 2 per cent. So I just want to clarify that when the Minister of Transportation is saying that this is about the small corner shop, the small corner store, if they're making more than \$500,000 a year in net profits, then yes, this reduction will help them. If they are making less than that, this will do absolutely nothing for those small businesses and the corner stores. I just want everyone to have the same set of facts because I think facts are important when we're making decisions. I just wanted to lay that out there.

I'm not saying that large corporations shouldn't have an opportunity to be prosperous. I certainly want them all to be prosperous. I want them to be prosperous, and I want them to share that prosperity with the people of this province. That's why I think that if we had something that was average, say – actually, we'd probably have to go up to be average because right now we've got Newfoundland at 15; P.E.I., 16; Nova Scotia, 16; New Brunswick, 14; Quebec, 11.6; Ontario, 11.5; Manitoba, 12; Saskatchewan, 12; Alberta, 12; B.C., 12. We're actually already below average. That's one thing I wanted to say.

Another thing I want to say is that the Government House Leader often rises in this House and likes to bring up the fact that our government served for one term, and now there's a new government. I want to say that I understand that what the Minister of Transportation said was that he heard: get rid of the NDP; that's all I care about. But I will tell you that at many doors that I knocked on in 2015, I heard the same thing about the PCs. I heard about corruption and entitlement. [interjections] Certainly, it seems like those are starting to creep their way significantly back into, particularly, the front bench but, specifically, I'd say, the Government House Leader's attitudes and the way he's behaving in this place tonight. Certainly, I welcome him to correct the record when he has an opportunity to speak on this if he feels differently, Mr. Chair. I'm just going by some of the tones and some of the heckling that I'm hearing here tonight.

Feel free to heckle, hon. member. I certainly welcome that opportunity. I think it's part of the important culture of debate and has a long tradition in this place. I know that some people are keen on changing tradition swiftly, but I think that this is part of the context in which we work together to form laws to govern this place and not just this place, this whole province.

I want to reiterate that this is a significant departure from being average, as the member referenced the person saying, like: just be average. This is way, way, way below average. This is significantly below average.

Again, when you have a fixed pot of resources and you're making decisions about where to allocate those, making the choice to give \$4.5 billion to corporations or making the choice about how you can use that \$4.5 billion collectively all across this province to find ways to increase opportunities for economic diversification, for important public services – I know that the Government House Leader cares deeply about the hospital in Sundre. I think I toured it with him, and he had deep concerns not that long ago that some of

the services might be reduced. Fortunately, he was able to work with a government that sat down, looked at the pot of resources, and found ways to actually improve conditions there, invest in a lab on-site, I believe, and make sure that we supported seniors aging in the community. Again, making choices to blow a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget will make outcomes like that far less likely, I can only imagine, especially given the fact that there is this review happening right now and the former minister who's a big part of it has a history of closing a lot of rural hospitals.

Again, we don't need to rush into these decisions. We can take the time to engage in them in a way that enables research and evidence to be presented and good decisions to come forward. I feel like the way the Government House Leader unilaterally changed the order of debate for tonight and then tried to call a quick question: he simply doesn't want his caucus to have an opportunity to hear about the kinds of things that these decisions that I'm sure – well, I hope that the caucus got a presentation about what the bills were going to be and what their impacts were going to be, but I doubt that people talked about that when we have \$4.5 billion less, it may create more economic stimulus. Research shows that it won't, and at the end of the day, we only have a certain number of dollars because we pledged that we were going to balance in I think they said 2021, but now maybe it's 2022. You know, you've got to decide which promises are going to be broken on which days, I guess. That seems to be what we're getting from the government opposite. These are some of the decisions that lead to those outcomes.

Mr. Chair, I want to say with all respect again, just to recorrect the record, that the last member, I would say, inaccurately at best and in extremely unparliamentary language at worst, mischaracterized who specifically will benefit most from these decisions. Again, the decision to reduce small-business taxes was something that we did because we knew that we had revenue. At that time it was revenue that was coming in from things like the price on carbon, and that was the time we made the decision. Because we had new revenue coming in, we made new decisions about where to cut other revenue in other areas.

10:20 p.m.

Making a unilateral decision about where to cut revenue will lead to a unilateral decision about where to cut expenses or where to increase revenue in other areas. If you're going to reduce your pot of revenue, you're kind of squeezing that balloon, and it's going to pop, or you're going to have to find a way to release some of that pressure. Are you going to release that pressure by bringing in other types of taxes, bringing back the regressive health care premium, bringing in tolls, increasing fees in parks, parks that families use in the summer? Where is this revenue going to come from, Mr. Chair? Or is it that the expenses are going to go down? Or is it both? I would probably think that it might be both, that there might be increased user fees, increased taxes, increased levies, and reduced opportunities for investing in the projects that people have named in their own ridings.

If they haven't named them, I encourage them to look at the capital plan. We worked quite comprehensively and collaboratively to make sure that we were taking considerations from all across the province. For example, the city of Red Deer has certainly punched above its weight when it came to investing or providing services in the hospital. The city of Red Deer certainly has carried a lot, being the only regional hospital in central zone for people to go to. In south zone there are two, and in north zone there are two. In Edmonton and Calgary there are more, but in Red Deer and central Alberta there is one. These are some of the things that we had planned on investing in based on the revenues that were planning

on coming into this province, but today this is a \$4.5 billion hole that we are being asked to blow in the budget.

Those are the main things I wanted to offer in this regard, and I imagine there might be opportunities to offer more in the future. But I look forward to hearing thoughts from members opposite if this is indeed the comment they heard most on the doorsteps, that they needed to cut \$4.5 billion in large business taxes, or if they heard about other initiatives in their communities that were important as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Any others?

Ms Issik: We've heard the members opposite talk about tax rates. They quote them across the country when we talk about the competitiveness of Alberta versus other provinces in Canada, and that's awesome. I think everybody in this Chamber understands that capital is mobile and you need to compete to keep the capital where it is or where you want it. If you're not competitive, the capital will walk, and so, too, will the jobs. I think everybody in this Chamber understands that concept.

Well, we've heard about the tax rates in all the other provinces in Canada, and Alberta, you know, is only a half a per cent off. Well, let's look at some other tax rates: Idaho, 6.925 per cent; Iowa, 12 per cent; Kansas, 7 per cent. Has anybody ever heard of North Dakota, at 4.31 per cent, or Oklahoma at 6 per cent? I think I'm making a point here. We are competing in at least a North American market if not a global market to keep our capital here. When capital leaves, so too do our jobs. When capital leaves, so too does our corporate tax revenue. Revenue will go down when corporations leave the province of Alberta. It's that simple. We are not competitive with the states in the United States of America. It's pretty simple.

I did hear at the doors a lot that we needed to reduce our corporate tax rates. I got asked that at probably about every fourth door from people who were with large corporations and people who were with small corporations. I can tell you that lowering corporate taxes will create jobs, it will bring capital back to this province, and it will create the economic growth that we need to pay for all of the services that we value as Albertans.

The Deputy Chair: Looking across, I actually do believe that I saw the Member for Edmonton-Manning jumping up.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to be able to stand and speak to Bill 3 as I haven't had the opportunity to do so yet. Let me begin by saying the obvious. There are challenges in our economy, and many Albertans are hurting. We're not questioning that. Some of these challenges have been decades in the making, like our failure to effectively diversify the economy, particularly within the energy sector. Some of these challenges are more immediate; for example, the lack of takeaway capacity to get our product to market. While we are faced with these challenges, we know what Albertans want. They want good, mortgage-paying jobs, they want security for their families, they want good schools and high-quality health care, and, most of all, they want to see a future where they can work in a strong economy and provide for their loved ones.

Mr. Chair, this brings me to today's debate and the UCP government's solution, that they have labelled the job-creation tax cut. The key questions before this Assembly and before Albertans are incredibly straightforward. Is the old Conservative recipe of corporate tax cuts the solution to the challenges facing Alberta's economy? Is it worth cutting \$4.5 billion in health care and

education funding to finance these cuts? Well, let me address each of these in turn.

Mr. Chair, we have heard the same argument, the same recipe, the same Conservatives across the world for the past 40 years. Corporate tax cuts are free; they pay for themselves. Tax cuts fuel so much economic growth and create so many jobs that citizens need fewer government services. Most importantly, corporate tax cuts trickle down to the rest of us so that regular families will become wealthier, happier, and more economically secure. In fairness, there was perhaps a time some 30 or 40 years ago where elements of this core Conservative argument had some merit. There was a time when the tax structure didn't create the ideal conditions for capital investment and for job creation.

Clearly, we are not in those times. The economic challenge facing Alberta is not the corporate tax rate, and to suggest to Albertans that we can wave a magic wand, lower the corporate tax rate, and therefore create jobs and increase government revenue is a fairy tale. Let me say this in no uncertain terms: this bill is a solution in search of a problem. Alberta already has the most competitive tax regime in the country. We Albertans enjoy an \$11 billion advantage over our next-closest province. We provide many other corporate advantages over our southern neighbours when it comes to investment decisions; for example, public health care, which dramatically lowers employers' labour costs and facilitates labour mobility.

In conversations with corporate leaders and with those in the industry I've honestly never heard them say that their primary concern is actually the corporate tax rate. In fact, as we've discussed in this Legislature, for many years the three main challenges facing our economy were self-evident: a lack of takeaway capacity for energy industries and the need for pipelines; an uncertain regulatory regime, with Bill C-69 and the need to speed up the processing time; and new technology and energy industries that have made new recoverable barrels profitable, particularly in the Permian basin, which has disrupted global energy markets.

The previous government understood these three main economic challenges, and we took action. We fought for pipelines and market access, and we brought in a crude-by-rail deal as an interim solution until sufficient pipeline takeaway capacity could be realized. We fought to amend Bill C-69 to ensure that it worked for the energy sector. We partnered with industry to invest and bring in new technologies to make our industry more economically efficient. And we helped lower the cost per barrel and helped take the carbon out of the barrel. Now, to be fair, did we as a government provide a solution to all of the three main economic challenges facing our economy in four short years? Of course, we didn't, but we made progress, and most importantly we were squarely focused on the real challenges facing our economy. To be clear, the main economic challenge was not the corporate tax rate.

As I said, Bill 3 is a solution in search of a problem. More than that, it represents a deficit of ideas from the members opposite. All members know well the challenges facing our economy, but they are turning to the old playbook of corporate tax cuts as a magical solution for everything, and they're selling Albertans a bill of goods. The problem is that these tax cuts won't stimulate investment. They won't create jobs. As economists have told us for decades, when you already have a competitive corporate tax rate, cutting it further is the least effective way to stimulate jobs and the economy.

10:30 p.m.

Let me give you an example. Even the former Prime Minister from Calgary, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, said as much. When he launched his economic strategy to get Canada back on track

following the financial crisis, he went on the record in 2009 with his budget, stating that corporate tax cuts were the least effective way to create jobs. Let me say that again. The former Prime Minister, himself an economist, argued that corporate tax rates were the least effective mechanism to grow the economy and create jobs.

Ms Hoffman: Say it one more time.

Ms Sweet: Mr. Chair, in Budget 2009 Prime Minister Harper published his government's analysis of the effectiveness of tax expenditure options to drive economic growth. The Harper government, of which this Premier was a senior member, determined that for every dollar invested in infrastructure, the economy would grow by \$1.60. For every dollar of tax cuts or income support to lower income households, the economy would grow \$1.70. Unfortunately for this government, Prime Minister Harper determined that for every dollar expended in corporate tax cuts, the economy would only grow by 30 cents.

To be clear, what the Prime Minister was saying at the time was that cutting corporate taxes was a losing proposition. He was saying that a tax cut for low-income families would be five times more effective at creating jobs and growing the economy than cutting the corporate tax rate. Now, I presume the Prime Minister said this because he was facing reality and was acknowledging the challenges before him. The economic challenge was, as it is now, not the corporate tax rate.

That, of course, is the problem with Bill 3. Bill 3 is this government's principal offer to Albertans to grow the economy and create jobs, but it's not addressing the main challenges facing our economy. The main challenges to our economy – and I said it before – are structural: lack of pipeline infrastructure, uncertain regulatory regime, rapidly growing technology. So Bill 3, the solution to the jobs challenge offered by this government, is not a solution. As I said, it is a solution in search of a problem and detached from the challenges facing Albertans.

Mr. Chair, members opposite know that Bill 3 is highly unlikely to create jobs or stimulate investment in the near future. Their platform actually presented it to the voters as such. Their own projections stated clearly that they didn't expect any new jobs or investment as a result of this tax cut for at least two years, but in a fit of transparency their platform was clear that the tax cut would reduce government revenue. They were clear that the tax cut would not pay for itself. If the government was going to reduce revenue through this ineffective tax cut, then they were going to have to cut spending. We all know what that means: larger classrooms; longer wait times in health care; crumbling roads, bridges, maybe no bridge at all; and layoffs.

Now, there might be some disagreement in this Chamber on how much these tax cuts are going to cost. We've estimated it at \$4.5 billion, the UCP platform estimated it at \$2.36 billion, and others, well, are somewhere in between. All these features are estimates, but there is a consensus in these estimates that these corporate tax cuts are going to reduce revenue, and they won't create any jobs for two years. The real question before the Assembly is simple. Are we going to vote in favour of a corporate tax cut that won't create jobs or stimulate investment? Are we going to give billions in corporate tax cuts, at the same time gutting our health and education systems to pay for it?

Well, Mr. Chair, Bill 3 is a triumph of ideology over reality. Bill 3 is a textbook conservative solution to every economic problem. It appears to the government members opposite that no matter what the circumstance, corporate tax cuts are the solution. Changing technologies in global energy markets? The UCP government solution: cut corporate taxes. Lack of takeaway capacity? Don't worry. The solution is to cut corporate taxes. Regulatory

uncertainty? Don't worry. The solution is to cut corporate taxes. Mr. Chair, our economy faces real challenges, and we need real solutions. We don't need a Bill 3, a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

But if the government is committed to following through with this bill, then Albertans deserve some answers. Given the billions of forgone revenue to the Crown, what is the government planning to cut? How many teachers will be laid off? Will the government cut payments to AISH or PDD? Will they consider closing rural hospitals? Will they wind down the government's previous initiative to bring water to reserves? Mr. Chair, Albertans deserve answers to these questions before this Chamber votes on this bill.

I call upon the government to come clean and be honest with Albertans on their proposed cuts. Let us hear from the ministers, honestly and transparently, about what they're going to cut. Then and only then can Albertans fairly judge for themselves whether Bill 3 is worthy of their support or whether it is simply a solution in search of a problem that doesn't exist.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm sure that your mom would be proud of you right now for having made good choices. I'll be sure to share that with her if I ever get the opportunity. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for making some interesting comments and, of course, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who spoke at length.

I just want to also offer some of my thoughts on this giant corporate tax giveaway that we're going to vote on here shortly. I want to address some of the things that the Member for Calgary-Hays said. First of all, I sure hope that he lives up to his ambition to be average. I know, having seen him in action for the last four years, that that'll be a bit of a stretch, Mr. Chair, but hope springs eternal. I hope that over the term we do see him reaching his goal of being average. I'm looking forward to that.

The Member for Calgary-Hays in his speech mentioned that corporate citizens were the best kind of citizens, which was reminiscent of recent presidential election nominee Mitt Romney, who famously in 2011 told people: corporations are people, my friend. That was one of the lines that really stuck to him and was a major reason that he lost that election to President Obama, a good choice that I think the people of the United States made in that election. He's false when he says that corporate citizens don't use health care or education or any of the public goods that are provided by the government of Alberta because the last time I checked, Mr. Chair, corporations need healthy people to work for them. Of course, the public health care sector provides those healthy people, keeps people healthy enough to go to work every day and carry out their duties as assigned to them by their employers.

Corporate citizens need educated people to go and work for them. Certainly, you would be hard-pressed to find a job these days that doesn't require you to at least know how to read and write, so some basic level of education is required. More and more, even a postsecondary education is required. That was certainly something that we heard, when we were government and I was Minister of Advanced Education, when Amazon decided not to shortlist Calgary as one of its locations for its second headquarters. I believe that if you check the location that Amazon did select, it has a higher combined state and federal tax rate than what Calgary would have had even under the current tax rates, much less the tax rates that the UCP is proposing.

Anyway, my point is that when Amazon decided not to shortlist Calgary as its second headquarters location, one of the reasons that they stated was because they couldn't find people with the skills

and qualifications that they needed to go to work for that company. We undertook as government to invest significantly in the high-tech skills of the people of Alberta. We rolled out a \$50 million plan to increase the number of seats in universities and colleges across this province in tech-related areas so that people could learn to become software engineers, web developers, the kinds of things that Amazon was looking to hire and couldn't find in Alberta because they weren't being educated in numbers great enough to justify Amazon establishing their second headquarters in Calgary.

Certainly, in consultations that we held with other members of the high-tech sector, we heard the same issue. We talked to Benevity, who is still seriously considering moving their headquarters from Calgary to Victoria, Mr. Chair, which is weird because the corporate tax rate in Victoria is much higher than what the members opposite are proposing. Yeah. It's weird because, of course, everybody in the UCP knows that the NDP chases away investment unless it's the B.C. NDP, of course, which is actually attracting investment to Victoria, a jurisdiction that's had – shock, gasp – a carbon tax for more than 10 years.

10:40 p.m.

I need to remind everyone that it was a Premier of a rather conservative bent who implemented that policy, a Premier who was so unpopular in conservative circles for implementing the carbon tax that he was appointed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to be the high commissioner to the United Kingdom after his stint as Premier was over. Boy, he sure learned his lesson, hey? Don't implement a carbon tax; otherwise, the federal Conservatives are really going to come down hard on you. I'm sure it was difficult for him to serve that stint in London.

The point is, Mr. Chair, that when the Member for Calgary-Hays says that corporate citizens don't rely on services, he's dead wrong. As I said, they rely on health care to keep their workers healthy and able to go to work. They rely on education to provide the education and the skills that people need so that they can hire people here. You know, most corporations that I know take advantage of roads and the other public services that we provide. Certainly, a growing number of corporations are concerned about the quality-of-life issues that their employees would face. As the Member for Calgary-Glenmore said, capital is mobile, and you can set up shop anywhere you like, so why not set up shop in a place that's a nice place to live? I'm not saying that, you know, North Dakota is a bad place to live, but I've been to North Dakota, and I have to say that a low corporate tax rate is probably the only attractive thing about that state.

You know, Mr. Chair, it's a cartoon sketch that they like to present about corporations, that they present to the people to justify cutting corporate taxes. Like I said, corporate citizens benefit significantly from the investments that they make in the public goods that are provided by the government of Alberta, and I think it's only fair that they pay their fair share. Certainly, most Albertans would agree with us. If you look at any polling that's been conducted recently in any North American jurisdiction, a vast majority of people believe that corporations should be paying at least their current rate of taxes if not slightly more.

In fact, the Member for Calgary-Hays will probably remember quite clearly when, in the run-up to the 2015 election, the people of Alberta made that demand for corporations to pay their fair share in taxes quite clearly known, because in the run-up to that election, of course, they undertook a number of budget consultations, the kinds of consultations that, of course, they accused us of doing, where they presupposed the answer before they actually undertook the consultation. But I remember quite clearly, Mr. Chair, that one of the things that they asked the people of Alberta in that consultation

in the run-up to the 2015 budget was what we should do about revenue. One of the answers, though, that wasn't allowed to be given was whether or not we could raise corporate taxes. That wasn't an option even though thousands and thousands of Albertans continually wrote in to the online forums and phoned their MLAs and let people know that they wanted corporate taxes to be raised.

What did they choose to do instead, Mr. Chair? They left corporate taxes where they were, at 10 per cent, and they chose to implement a health care premium on the people of Alberta. That was an incredibly unpopular move.

In 2015, Mr. Chair, even though Alberta had gone through a period of extraordinary growth and prosperity, the average working stiff, like the Member for Calgary-Hays's dad, if he had been working at the time, was working more hours but not really seeing his real wages increase by any significant amount because the cost of living was rising much higher than wages were at that time. For the government to say, "You know what, working people of Alberta? We're not going to ask the corporations who are doing really well to pay their fair share, but we are going to ask people who are falling further and further behind to pay more for health care, that should be provided to them through the taxes that they already paid," seemed like a raw deal to the people of Alberta, and in fact they rejected it soundly.

You know, the Member for Calgary-Hays encourages us to learn the lessons from previous elections, so I would return the favour to him, Mr. Chair. I would encourage him to remember the lesson from the 2015 election and the budget consultations that they undertook in the run-up to that election. If you ask working people, the average Albertan, to pay for services and let corporations off the hook, the people will not stand for it. They understand what a fair deal is much better than the members opposite, and they won't have any part of it.

Mr. Chair, this is what all of our members here on this side of the House have been telling the members opposite all night. You know, we expect high-quality health care, we expect high-quality education, freely available to everyone in Alberta regardless of their financial circumstances, regardless of their geographic circumstances, regardless of their race, any kind of life circumstances that they happen to face. If they're asked to let wealthy corporations off the hook and pay more out of their pockets when they have less going into their pockets than they have in more than a decade, that's an unfair deal, and I don't think the people of Alberta will stand for it.

Certainly, we have a number of election histories. I know the members opposite are fond of talking about election histories. You know, this is modelled on the same Trump tax cuts that were implemented in the run-up to the 2018 mid-term election. The Republicans were annihilated in that mid-term election, Mr. Chair, largely because of the tax cut. That was the only significant legislative accomplishment that that President and that Republican-controlled Senate and House of Representatives was able to achieve in the two years in the run-up to that election. Based on that one, single legislative milestone, the people of the United States voted overwhelmingly in favour of Democrats, who were running on a platform of fair taxes for corporations and a better deal for the average American.

Certainly, at the state level where it's been tried, it's also been rejected soundly by voters. We've talked a lot about the Kansas experiment. You know, the Kansas experiment was such a colossal failure that after two terms of trying it, the citizens of Kansas elected a Democrat, which is the first time in – I don't know – modern history, I think, that the people of Kansas elected a Democrat.

You know, I am warning the members opposite to study the electoral history that they are so fond of reminding us of. When they implement these massive tax cuts on profitable corporations, it will be wildly unpopular with the people of Alberta, who are working more hours and seeing less take-home pay than they have for a decade, Mr. Chair. Not only that, they will be getting less services as a result of it. Nobody feels good about having their kids go to a class with 35 other kids and not being able to get the help they need if the Royal Bank is making windfall profits.

10:50 p.m.

It's remarkable to me, Mr. Chair, that, you know, the members opposite talk about the debt and how much money we pay in interest to bankers and bondholders every year as a result of the debt that we owe, and they chastise us for giving away so much money to bankers and bondholders, yet here in this bill they give even more money to the very bankers and bondholders that they want to deride and chastise us for paying interest payments to. That doesn't make sense, and I know that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in her comments earlier this evening was talking about why she can't figure it out. The only thing that I've come to is that you can't apply logic to the members opposite's thinking. It's right because they say it's right, and that's the only logic that they need.

If pressed, they'll say, "Well, we won the election, don't you know, so of course that it makes it right," which is interesting, Mr. Chair, because on the issue of running and winning elections on campaign platform pieces, I would remind the members opposite that we ran and won an election on implementing farm safety legislation. Of course, they never accepted that as an acceptable argument in favour of implementing farm safety legislation that finally gave farmers legislated protections that are enjoyed by farm labourers in every other jurisdiction in the country, but they want us to accept this argument that because they won the election, they have to do it, right?

Anyway, it's not hypocrisy because the members opposite don't understand it as hypocrisy. It's right simply because they say it's right, and they don't want to think about it anymore or expect anybody else to apply any further logic to it, Mr. Chair.

You know, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, of course, talked about some of the things in her constituency that are at risk if we go ahead with this 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway.

Ms Hoffman: In their constituencies.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Well, in their constituencies as well.

I think it's important for every member here in the House to understand what's at stake for my constituents. Right now we are in the middle of a giant construction project, extending the LRT from downtown through to Mill Woods, Mr. Chair, a project that's been incredibly disruptive, especially to the businesses and school kids who travel every day along 95th Avenue through the Strathearn neighbourhood. That has been shut down for an indeterminate length of time because of the construction of that LRT. So what happens if the money for that suddenly disappears? I'm not saying that the city won't be able to construct it, but, you know, I certainly wouldn't want my constituents to have gone through these years of significant inconvenience and disruption in their lives just to have the carpet pulled out from under them at the last minute so that we could give a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway to the wealthiest corporations in the province. That seems grossly unfair.

Already we have schools that are closing in my constituency. The St. Gabriel school in the Capilano neighbourhood was decided to be closed one day after the UCP was elected because, of course, the

Catholic school board knew what was coming in the budget, possibly because, you know, they had had previous interactions with the Member for Red Deer-North when she was a Catholic school trustee. I don't know. But, of course, they saw what was coming and decided to close the school, which is creating significant hardships for not just people in my riding, Mr. Chair, but people from Sherwood Park and other parts of the city who travel through Edmonton-Gold Bar on their way to work and use St. Gabriel school as a convenient place to drop off their kids in order to go to school and pick them up, of course, on the way back home from work.

That's one school that's already closed, and they hadn't even gotten to the point of making the corporate tax cuts or these other kinds of terrible decisions about the budget. I'm just wondering what other schools are set to close in my riding, Mr. Chair. Is it going to be, you know, Austin O'Brien high school? Is it going to be Vimy Ridge high school? Is it going to be McNally high school? Is it going to be one of the many elementary schools? Are the people of Gold Bar going to keep their community school?

The Deputy Chair: I believe that the individual who stood up quite quickly there was the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The personal attacks continue from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, but if this is the small price that we must pay to protect Albertans from gross mismanagement, so be it. The hon. members of the opposition keep talking about a temporary reduction in corporate tax revenues, which will result in increased investment, jobs, and greater long-term corporate tax revenues, something he and his colleagues describe as the \$4.5 billion hole. They say it over and over. Where was their protest when they were digging a \$60 billion chasm in Alberta's finances?

In some ways I feel bad for the new Minister of Finance as he has been tasked with managing the financial disaster left by the previous government. But then I remember that all he has to do is do the opposite of the previous Finance minister, and he might just go down as the greatest Finance minister in Alberta's history. Now, unlike the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and, certainly, his colleague the Opposition House Leader – I won't repeat his comments because I don't want to spread ignorance – we actually understand . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Point of order.

Mr. Jones: A few of us have actually worked . . .

The Deputy Chair: I'd like to hear from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Mr. Chair, under 23(h), (i), and (j) the Member for Calgary-South East clearly referred to my comments as ignorant, and that's clearly designed to not only impute false motives but also to . . .

Ms Hoffman: Create disorder.

Mr. Schmidt: . . . create disorder. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Yeah. Anyway, you know, it's interesting that the Member for Calgary-South East started by complaining about personal attacks

and then claimed that my comments were ignorant, Mr. Chair. [interjection] Yes. That is my point of order.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the interjection. It was an interesting interjection, but it's not a point of order. This is clearly a matter of debate. While the hon. member may feel that the comments were not ignorant, clearly the other member thought that the comments were ignorant. It's clearly a matter of debate, and I would like to hear the remainder of the speech.

The Deputy Chair: Having heard from both sides, I think that the most prudent way to go about this process would be to remind all members to, if they can, keep their language towards wording that would not tend to create disorder in the House in order for us to then, therefore, be able to continue to focus on Bill 3.

Please, the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Debate Continued

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me discuss something that I personally would characterize as an uninformed view on small businesses and businesses across Alberta as I've actually worked with them for my entire career. As members may not be aware, it takes a lot to start and keep a business running. A large portion of businesses fail. The average small business in Canada basically makes no money. So for anyone to claim that a business could afford to not make a few thousand a month: I just think that it's ridiculous.

Continuing on, a few of us on this side have actually worked in business. We support businesses because we support Albertans – their entrepreneurial spirit, their ingenuity, their work ethic – because businesses create jobs for Albertans and businesses pay for the essential services that Albertans need. Right now they want both.

11:00 p.m.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. It's getting late. We're trying to keep the energy going here. I'm happy to participate in that.

You know, of course, I'm going to be taking the position that this bill is completely inappropriate. I would like to take some time to talk a little bit about the absence of logic behind the bill and talk a little bit about the direction that I think this government is trying to go in and spend a bit of time talking about the fact that other people who have looked at these kinds of issues in the past have all come to the same conclusion, and that is that this kind of bill is ineffective in achieving the outcomes.

The piece that I'm wanting to talk about is the connection between the intention and the outcome here in this bill, because that is where the major fault lies within the bill. If you ask us about the desire to have businesses in the province of Alberta, indeed in all of Canada do well, everyone on this side of the House would say: "We absolutely want to see businesses do well. We want them to be able to succeed. We want them to be able to have dollars so that they can create employment."

The problem is that that's just a theoretical model. We have this notion that if we provide resources to the businesses, they will create more jobs. We have to look beyond that general notion and go into the evidence where that notion has been applied and where there's actual, practical lived experience. I can tell you that the

lived experience in the jurisdictions that made the decision to provide corporate tax deductions has been that they did not create jobs.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Manning went through and talked very clearly about the fact that Prime Minister Harper had assessed this very question here in Canada and clearly came out against this type of bill. He said that the evidence is that it does not provide the outcome that's there, that's expected. That's the point that we need to get across to the members of the government.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

We get your intent. We understand what you desire. What we're trying to tell you is that there is no correlation between what it is that you desire and what it is that you are doing to try to achieve that. It's faulty thinking. You can't engage in a behaviour over and over again, have it proved to be wrong and faulty, and then engage in it again and call it reasonable, intelligent, thoughtful behaviour. It isn't.

I want to talk a little bit about the fact that on the other side of the House they like to get up and make a number of statements about the previous government, of which I was a part, and the type of statements they make again demonstrate the lack of logic and the lack of ability to put a relationship between behaviour and outcome.

Now, fortunately for members of the other side of the House, before I got elected, I was a university professor, and I happened to teach courses on research. One of the things that we would spend a fair amount of time on, particularly in our first classes – people often refer to them as 101, economics 101 or research 101 – is the difference between correlation and causality. It's something that is continuously brought up in error in this House. For example, the Member for Calgary-Hays, the Minister of Transportation, said that we raised the taxes yet the government dollars that came in in subsequent years were less, not more, after we raised the taxes. Therefore, he says that our raising the taxes was the problem and resulted in the reduction of government income.

Now, we call that a first-year fallacy in a research class, and I'll show you why it's a fallacy by giving you another example: the vast majority of criminals in prisons in the province of Alberta have eaten cheese; therefore, eating cheese must cause criminality, because the two are very, very highly correlated; in fact, it's almost a hundred per cent. That's the kind of logic that is being used by the Transportation minister to explain why, when we raised the taxes, things go down.

Now, what you need to understand is that in a very small, theoretical model, where there are only two variables, then one might be able to make that prediction, but I want to inform the members of the government that running the province of Alberta is not as simplistic and black and white as you would like it to be, that there is a reality out there. There are multiple variables that will influence the things that happen.

So when you look at what's happened over the last number of years, you can say that we raised the taxes and that the amount of money that came in was less, but if you believe that there's a causal relationship between those two, it betrays a lack of logical understanding and a lack of ability to learn from lived experience. Now, we have a word for that, when one doesn't learn from their lived experience, but it's a little unparliamentary, so I'll just leave it to your imagination right now.

I think that what we have before us now is a bill that is essentially a race to the bottom, a bill that will exacerbate the very problem that economists around the world have been identifying since the 1970s, and that is the increase in inequality between

people in society. That is a return to an earlier century, where some people had significant amounts of money but where the vast majority of people did not. What we've seen since the 1970s is that that inequality has been regularly increasing year over year and increasing at a higher rate such that we are at the place now where seven individuals in this world have more money than 50 per cent of the countries combined in this world. That's a problem. That's a return to the Sun King idea. That's a return to predemocracy ideas.

Now, I've often complained that the members of the government seem to derive their policies from the 1950s. I've often said that I don't know what year the Premier was born in. I don't know if he was born in the '50s, but he certainly likes to live his life there. Now what I'm finding is that the ideas that are being brought forward are not ideas from the 1950s. Indeed, they're ideas from the 1600s, and I'm very concerned about that.

Now, previously in this House we've had an opportunity to look at some of the evidence, but apparently the evidence doesn't really matter. We've looked at the fact that the American Congressional Budget Office has done a particular study on the very question we're talking about today and has identified that giving tax breaks is a poor method of increasing the number of jobs. Ironically, it's partly because of the issue that was raised by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore earlier, when she stood up and indicated to all of us that we all agreed – and I'll go along with it – that capital is mobile. I agree.

She went on then to list a number of jurisdictions that had lower tax rates, but again we have that first-year, 101 fallacy, that because there are people with lower tax rates, that is the reason why people left. Yet she failed to provide the evidence of the new bitumen mine in Kansas. So it was a bit confusing for me.

11:10 p.m.

I can see, then, that we have a problem here in terms of trying to understand what it means when we say that capital is mobile. If you believe this to be true – apparently, it's been declared by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore that we all agree on that; she's already put that on the record, so I guess we all do – then giving them more money would seem to indicate that you yourselves have the belief that that money will leave Alberta, that it will go somewhere else, that it will go to Kansas, that it will go to other states.

Ms Hoffman: North Dakota.

Mr. Feehan: North Dakota. Of course. I've never been down there. I understand that there's an interesting mountain with things carved into it.

Ms Hoffman: That's South Dakota.

Mr. Feehan: Oh. That's South Dakota? Sorry.

Mr. Schmidt: North Dakota has nothing.

Mr. Feehan: It has nothing. Okay.

The point is that this type of bill has been tested in reality, and the people that have done the assessment on it, such as the Congressional Budget Office in the United States, say that that is precisely why it doesn't work, because capital is mobile, and that when they are given money, they do not create jobs. They instead – let me check my notes to make sure I get it right – buy shares back. That's what happens. And where does the money go when they buy shares back? To the very wealthy people that have the money to invest in those shares, who do not live in Alberta . . .

An Hon. Member: Or North Dakota.

Mr. Feehan: . . . or North Dakota. And when they get that extra money, they don't create more jobs in Alberta. They go on better vacations in Bahrain. They use marble for the floors instead of tile. All over the world they travel, and they visit their friends on their yachts. That's the kind of thing they do.

The Congressional Budget Office does have some suggestions for you, however. It says that, at best, when things go a hundred per cent well with deductions to corporations, you end up by maybe creating up to 4 jobs per million dollars. Pretty expensive jobs. They do go on to say that there are other ways to create jobs. Let me just find my page here for a moment because it's very interesting. The Congressional Budget Office has studied this and found – wait for it – that the thing that creates the most jobs is government spending, at 19 jobs for every million dollars. So we go from your choice of creating 4 jobs for every million dollars to 19 jobs for every million dollars if you instead engage in government spending, which I think is exactly what we should be doing here at this time.

You know, I find it very curious that we have members opposite who say that they understand business in a way that somehow I don't even though I ran my own business and I was a vice-president of Catholic Social Services, the largest multifunction public social service agency in the country. I had an opportunity to be engaged in lots of these kinds of things in the past. But they understand things. Yet they can't get to a very basic understanding of things that my first-year research students learned, and that is that you have to look at the evidence, and you have to look at it from the point of view of there being complex decisions to be made, not simple lines to be drawn, as was suggested by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, who says: we know how to draw the dotted line. That's the problem. You're drawing a dotted line. That's not what you're supposed to be doing. You're supposed to be reading the evidence and having the evidence suggest to you what it is that one should gather from that evidence. If you fill in the line, you fill it in with your value system, with your determination: this is what I want the outcome to be. That's not good research. That's not good government.

What we need to do instead is that we need to listen to people like Prime Minister Harper. [interjections] I've never said that before in my life, and I want it on record that I said it once. We need to listen to the congressional . . .

An Hon. Member: We need to stop the clock.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah; you're done.

Mr. Feehan: I'm done? When I get to agreeing with Harper, I'm out of here. Okay. [interjection] It's just water; I swear.

I think it's really important. You keep saying that you understand business better, yet the things you bring forward tell me that you haven't done your research or that you didn't understand your research. If it comes down to it, we actually agree with what you want. We want more jobs. We want more people to be employed. We know that the evidence is there, plainly in front of all of us, that the way that you do that is that you create the new big deal. You create jobs. You build bridges. You build roads. You create climate leadership plans that employ people on every reserve around the province of Alberta, in every corner of this province. You give them an opportunity to work where they live and live where they work. That's the kind of thing that you do. You don't take the money and give it to somebody who doesn't care whether you happen to live in Wandering River or whether you happen to live at the Blood Tribe or whether you happen to live in Hinton or Hanna, because

they only want to make a profit. They can do that in a variety of other places, and they will take that money and go away.

We know that what really creates jobs is not the supply side. It's not by giving money to the corporations. They don't create jobs just because they have more money. They don't say: "I've got more money. Why don't I create some more jobs?" They fulfill a mandate for a demand. The people that create jobs are the everyday people of the province of Alberta, who spend their money in the province of Alberta. If you give that same amount of money to the people who live here, they will spend their money at the local store. They will spend their money at the local restaurant. That's what creates the jobs.

No business said: let's create jobs just to find out what happens. Real businesspeople say: there's a demand out there, and I am going to try to fill that demand. If the demand goes away, they stop producing it. If the number of chairs they're selling goes from a hundred a day to five a day, they don't produce a thousand chairs in hopes that somehow they'll sell more of them. They start producing five a day because that's what makes their budget balance work, and then they sell that. It's the demand that makes it go up and down, the demand that makes the jobs get created. It's a pretty basic concept, and it's one that I really wish you would apply, that you would look at: how do we influence the demand? That's what we've been doing on this side of the House. We've been looking not at where Alberta has been in the past but where Alberta needs to be and: how will we meet the demand of Albertans in the years to come?

Wayne Gretzky was famous for saying: I don't skate where the puck is; I skate to where the puck is going to be. That's what we want you to do in this House. We don't want you to go back to the same old jobs all the time because that's what you want, that you are hoping will happen. You can't create them to happen. Instead, you need to say: "What is needed in this province? What's going to happen in this province over the next 10 and 15 years?" We need you to start to have a vision of the future, to stop living your life in the 1950s, to stop living the dream of the 1970s, and to bring yourself into the 21st century, where you will know, from looking around the world, that we are moving to a carbonless economy, an economy that is built around new needs, new desires, and therefore new demands. Good businesspeople are looking for what those demands are going to be, and they're going to satisfy those demands. They're not going to just create jobs because they happen to have some extra dollars. That's not what they do with it.

So I'm very concerned. I'm very concerned that this whole idea of the difference between causality and correlation is lost on the government, that they draw simple dotted lines between their intent and the desired outcomes that are a betrayal of absence of fact, absence of logical reasoning. We need you to take a step back. What we're doing at this moment here is asking you to do that.

11:20 p.m.

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have enough evening here to respond to everything that's been said. There are some things that simply have to be stated. Listening to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford makes me understand why this province is in the fiscal condition it's in today. For the member to suggest that there is no correlation between a competitive business environment, of which your tax competitiveness is a major piece, is nonsensical. It's simply not factual. Business investments and, with that, jobs and opportunities attract and end up in jurisdictions where

there's a competitive business environment. Tax structure is a big piece of that business environment. That is why we are going to ensure that Alberta has by far the most competitive tax jurisdiction in Canada and one of the most competitive jurisdictions, in fact, in all of North America.

I want to talk a little bit about corporations because, of course, this tax relates to corporations specifically. We've heard, I think, a fair bit of disparaging about corporations tonight by various members. I've heard some things I can agree with. I've certainly heard from the Member for Edmonton-Manning, who talked about the importance of jobs, about the importance of feeding our families, about the importance of having opportunities for the next generation. I absolutely agree with that. She talked about the fact that there are many factors at play in the economy of Alberta, and I appreciate that and recognize that. That's why this government has a very robust plan not to tackle one issue but to tackle a multitude of economic issues that will improve our competitiveness and will do it simultaneously to ensure that businesses are going to invest in Alberta and create jobs and opportunities. Corporations, which are really a structure for businesses, provide an awful lot of benefit. Businesses provide an awful lot of benefit to every community, to every region in this province and this country. They are massive job creators, Madam Chair, in our region and in my constituency.

During the election as I went door to door, the one thing that I heard repeatedly was that we absolutely needed to create not only additional jobs but better-paying jobs. I met individual after individual that was either unemployed or severely underemployed. Madam Chair, that is a result of a lack of investment in this province at this point in time. Corporations create jobs. Corporations create opportunities, and yes, corporations reinvest capital where there is additional opportunity that capital will be reinvested. That is what we're about. We're about actually creating a competitive environment where profits will be reinvested back into Alberta, which will create jobs and opportunities. Corporations contribute to our communities in many ways. They contribute to our infrastructure in our communities. In my constituency corporations have assisted with school projects. In my constituency corporations line up and buy 4-H calves and support rural kids who are working hard to raise their project. Corporations respond to community groups, to sports groups. They assist at a variety of levels within our communities.

There was some discussion on at what level our corporate tax cut will apply. There was discussion around the small-business deduction tonight, and I listened with interest at that discussion. It's true that the corporate tax cut that we're proposing today will in fact take effect when corporations earn \$500,000. Madam Chair, there are many small corporations and medium-sized corporations as well as large corporations to whom this will apply. Let me characterize it this way. Successful corporations – and every business owner wants to be a successful businessperson regardless of what business they're in. Even small businesses that can become somewhat successful, small businesses that would be successful enough to, in fact, benefit from this tax reduction typically reinvest in their communities, and as the corporation size grows, they provide more opportunity not only in terms of job creation but in opportunities for other new business start-ups.

In my constituency there are a host of small businesses, businesses where it's often a couple or an individual that own the business. They work 14 hours a day. These are start-up businesses. Many of them don't make it, but the ones that do are made by blood, sweat, and tears. Typically those opportunities very often are provided by larger successful corporations that, again, provide opportunity in our communities for oil and gas service companies,

for retail shops, for professional services, for grocery stores, for gas stations. In Alberta we desperately need investment to provide not only jobs but to provide opportunities for our businesses, whether they be large corporations or small corporations.

I want to also talk a little bit about the corporate tax revenue and the effect that our tax cut will have on government revenues. I think we heard one of the members opposite basically cite from our platform. We were up front with Albertans during the election campaign. We were transparent with Albertans. We recognized that our plans to decrease corporate tax revenue, create a very competitive business environment, attract investment, and create jobs would in fact result initially in a diminished corporate revenue for the government of Alberta. We've been transparent about that.

We also know – and, in fact, economists have backed us up – that as investment arrives in this province, as jobs and opportunity are created, there will be an opposite effect. In other words, there will be a buffering effect, where that additional investment, the additional economic activity, will create more tax revenue for this province. In fact, University of Calgary Professor Dr. Bev Dahlby has concluded that by 2023-24 this corporate tax cut will generate more provincial government revenue than what it has cost Albertans, and at the same time it's going to create 55,000 additional jobs and \$12.7 billion of economic activity. Madam Chairman, this is exactly the initiative that this province needs.

We made a commitment to Albertans that we were going to create a business environment, that we were going to bring in policies that would again attract investment, create jobs and opportunities. Madam Chairman, that's what we're about, and that's what we're going to do on behalf of every Albertan and on behalf of every Alberta family.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to return to the House tonight and take part in this debate. This is a bill that I haven't had the chance to speak to yet. It's one that I think is eliciting a lot of emotion, certainly some humour here in the House tonight, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here and take part in it. I'm not sure I'll have anything quite as colourful as some of my colleagues to add to the record tonight, but I think that it's important for me to speak to this bill.

11:30 p.m.

You know, I've heard many members speak in this House on this bill and others that these bills need to move forward, that they are here to vote for these bills because they were sent here by their constituents and by the majority of votes that they received. To be completely honest, Madam Chair, I am here for the same reason, and I am standing to speak against this bill tonight for the same reason, because a significant majority of my constituents here in Edmonton-City Centre did not vote for this step. Indeed, when I went out and I knocked on doors – and I would put my record in speaking with my constituents up against any other member's in this House in terms of being present, visible, and listening to folks in my community – the majority of people that I spoke to were not in favour of this significant tax giveaway. Now, to be clear, I did speak with some members of my constituency, some residents here, who told me that they would not vote for me because they supported this policy, and I respect that view, but I am here tonight to speak to this bill because a majority of my constituents did not favour this bill and a number of other policies that were put forward by the now governing party.

I appreciate this opportunity to stand here tonight and represent the voice of my constituents. Now, I recognize that as we have this debate, as has been, I think, pretty amply demonstrated here in the House tonight, it's very unlikely that we are going to find any agreement on this bill between the two sides of the House. It's not going to happen. Indeed, I'm not under any illusion that there's anything that I can say here in this House tonight that is going to likely sway – I'll be completely honest; let's be humble here – probably a single member of the government caucus. But that's quite all right, Madam Chair. My intent tonight is to speak on behalf of my constituents.

You know, the reason that I truly believe, Madam Chair, that I am not going to sway any members of this government caucus is because their belief that this bill will bring jobs and investment back to Alberta, that it will add more revenue to the budget than it removes is for them essentially an article of faith. We've seen that pretty amply demonstrated here tonight. These members cannot show a single actual example where taking this step has had that result – we've talked about multiple jurisdictions that have taken this step and have not in fact seen more revenue come back than what they took out of their budget – or where it has led to a net creation of jobs or improvement for that local economy. In fact, in many cases we have seen the opposite.

You know, it was interesting, Madam Chair, that my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford used a term that I appreciated hearing because it was something that I wanted to talk about, that being theoretical models. I often think sometimes, when I hear some of these arguments, about the concept of physics. I'll be clear. I am no physicist. Physics in high school was not my strongest subject. I did very well in math, but physics involved a lot more formulas and a lot more exceptions and things you had to consider before you decided which formula you were going to apply. Math is very straightforward, generally, most of the time. Physics is more complex.

But one thing I do understand about physics is that there are different ways to look at it. In the world of theoretical models, you can assume that things are going to operate in a very particular way. If I push a ball along a flat surface, in a theoretical model I can posit that that is a frictionless surface and that, therefore, that ball will roll forever. But we know the reality is that friction does exist. Therefore, if I push that ball, it will roll for a certain distance, and then it will stop. We also know that outside of that model I could push that ball, and I could set it rolling, and then someone could come and put their hand in the way and block it from moving. The reality is, Madam Chair, that I cannot simply say that in every single instance where I take that ball and I give it a push, it will reach the other side of the room. There are many factors which could get involved and cause that not to be the case.

Now, what I am hearing, again, from many members in this House when they stand up and they argue in favour of this bill is that they are operating in a world of theoretical models. They are making assumptions based on a belief that there is, in fact, no friction involved or that if there is friction involved, there's nobody who could put a thumb on the scale. They are living in a world of ideals. Indeed, Madam Chair, in an ideal world, if we cut the corporate tax by 4 per cent, then that 4 per cent would go back to companies, and those companies would say: "Thank you. You're wonderful people. Therefore, I will take this money, and I will put it directly back into your economy."

Now, I am not saying that that isn't going to happen to some extent. I don't think anyone in this House is necessarily disagreeing about some of the realities. We acknowledge that there is a certain point at which, if you tax too much, you will begin to see a losing prospect or that there is a point at which, if you tax too low, you're

going to lower your revenues to the point where you're not able to function as a government. I think the bone of contention that we have today is: where is that balance? Where does that actually fall? What I would say, Madam Chair, is that what this government is proposing to do is to roll the dice and gamble with Albertans, with the public services that Albertans depend on, with the budget that is there to protect and support Albertans.

I'm not the only one that's said this. This is something that has come out in a few articles that have been published recently in the *Edmonton Journal*. Keith Gerein, a columnist whom I've quoted before in this House: I kind of like Keith. I've got respect for him. He doesn't always see things my way, I don't always see things his, but I feel like he's a fairly fair-minded guy. You know, he talks about the corporate tax cut that we're talking about here tonight. The headline for his article is UCP Gambles Alberta's Prosperity on Tax Cuts, but Is It a Smart Bet? He says that when we're talking about economic policy in a small jurisdiction like Alberta, it's "a bit like discussing strategies for winning at the casino." He says that you can calculate the odds as best you can. You can try to figure out what the trends are, which way things tend to go in the house, but whether you go home with more money than you came in with or whether you go home with significantly less is still going to be subject to a lot of factors that are simply outside your control.

We are not dealing here with the theoretical model; we are dealing here with an economy that is part of a larger global economy in which many factors that affect us have been shifted. Mr. Gerein suggested that this is a relevant analogy because he says that the Kenney government is "rolling the dice on [Alberta's] economic future."

An Hon. Member: Name.

Mr. Shepherd: Oh, pardon me. I apologize. I withdraw the name.

He refers to this particular government, that he says is "rolling the dice on the province's economic future . . . by going all-in on a massive tax cut." He refers to this as "aggressive and risky . . . a gamble on classic trickle-down economics." He goes on to note: "The risk of the plan backfiring is significant, but the government appears to have no timeline or threshold to pull the plug [on this risky idea] if [it] becomes clear the scheme isn't working." The government is not only gambling, Madam Chair; they are going all-in. They're putting all the chips on the table, and if the roll of the dice does not go their way, it is Albertans that are going to lose.

Now, we've heard members opposite quote two particular economists with whom they are somewhat friendly and whose opinion, therefore, they tend to prefer. But they are ignoring the fact that, as Mr. Gerein notes, there are skeptical economists who have also weighed in on this, and they've noted, again, that our economy is subject to a lot of complex and fluid things that are happening in the larger global economy, things that are going on across the world that affect us.

Indeed, as the Member for Calgary-Glenmore noted, if we take this step, if this is the be-all and end-all, if this is the ultimate step that needs to be taken to ignite Alberta's economy, what happens, then, when other provinces and states start to lower their own corporate taxes? Do we simply, then, continue to engage in that race to the bottom?

11:40 p.m.

Now, as has been noted, initially when they announced this policy as part of their platform, they said that the cut would pay for itself. No loss. But the fact is, as Mr. Gerein notes, Stokes

Economics suggested that "the tax cut would instead decrease provincial revenue by \$3.4 billion over four years while getting back only \$1 billion in revenue generated by new economic activity." One billion. Investing 3 to get 1 back: that's the analysis from Stokes Economics. As Mr. Gerein notes, "Alberta Finance projections suggest lost revenue from the tax cut could range anywhere from \$1.7 billion to \$4.7 billion over four years."

As was the habit of these members when they sat on this side of the House, we'll choose to go with the largest possible figure and talk about that \$4.7 billion hole that they want to blow in the Alberta budget. As my colleagues have so aptly pointed out, Madam Chair, this government has already said that they are going to be making cuts, because they have set up their blue-ribbon panel with no other choice. All they can do is find ways to reduce spending and expenditures, and on top of that they will remove an additional up to \$4.7 billion out of the budget and then turn to Albertans, download that onto the school boards, onto the municipalities, onto Alberta Health Services, and from there onto all of the front-line health care workers, and say: you figure it out. We've seen this before. That's been the approach of previous Conservative governments whenever the price of oil would drop.

As Mr. Gerein says, "In short, the UCP corporate tax cut is a big gamble that could jeopardize public services for little to no economic benefit." Also from the *Edmonton Journal*, an editorial. Now, I recognize that members of the government were very, very happy with the editorial page of the *Edmonton Journal* when it was corporate leaders of Postmedia in Ontario that provided an endorsement for their party. They may be less pleased to hear the thoughts of actual local individuals who serve on the editorial board, who live here in the province of Alberta, who contribute to the local economy and also depend on the local services. These people, journalists, Madam Chair, who I respect far more than some who simply choose to repeat and rewrite media releases from the government, in their editorial also note that these corporate tax cuts are a gamble.

Now, they give the Premier credit. They say that they give him credit for delivering on what he's pitched. Absolutely, it was in the campaign platform. They laid out what they were going to do. They've somewhat changed what they said about what the impacts of that would be, but let's give them credit. They told Albertans what they intended to do. But they go on to note that there is something that the Premier did not tell Albertans, that this plan is "a calculated gamble, with not insignificant risk."

They also go on to note that there are a number of complex and global factors that have impacted Alberta's economy. The realities of what we've experienced over the last four years, what we are facing now are not the simplistic narrative which the Premier and members of this government choose to continue to repeat. Again, Madam Chair, I recognize that for some of these members, they probably truly believe it. It is an article of faith. They honestly believe that it is what our government did that destroyed the economy and that by taking these steps, they are going to somehow restore it. As the editorial lays out:

Even if companies flock to Alberta, it's no sure bet that their outlays will offset billions in foregone tax income. If the gamble falls short, it's likely the money will be carved out of spending.

They conclude by stating:

Albertans desperate to revive the economy may be willing to try slashing corporate taxes but it's likely they don't want to subsidize business with drastic cuts to health care, education, infrastructure spending and other public services – of the kind Albertans saw during the time of Klein's "Alberta Advantage."

That is why, Madam Chair, I would like to bring forward an amendment. If we are going to take this risky gamble, if this

government wants to put Albertans' public services on the table and hope that they're going to hit it big, then at least let's be a bit more measured about how big of a pot we put out there. Let's maybe hold a little something back to protect the people of Alberta. I have an amendment I would like to introduce that will do just that. We have the original and the copies, and I'll wait for the original copy to reach you. I'll give you the opportunity to view it, and then I'll go into a bit more on the specifics of how we can perhaps protect Albertans a little bit.

The Chair: Hold on, Member. Just wait till we have the amendment, and then we'll let you speak about it.

This will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. I recognize that my time is growing short, so I'll quickly read this into the record. I move that Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, be amended as follows. Section 2(b) is amended by striking out the proposed section 21(t) and substituting the following:

- (t) beginning after December 31, 2019 is 10% of the amount taxable in Alberta for the year

and by striking out the proposed section 21(v) to (y).

Section 3 is amended in clause (b) in the proposed section 22(2.1297)(c) by striking out "and before January 1, 2021" and by striking out the proposed subsections (2.1298) and (2.1299); and in clause (c) by striking out " (2.1295), (2.1296), (2.1297), (2.1298) and (2.1299)" and substituting " (2.1295), (2.1296), and (2.1297)".

In other words, we would hold at the end of this year at 10 per cent. Let's not put all of Alberta's opportunity on the table. Let's be prudent gamblers. Let us put out half the pot and give this government the opportunity to demonstrate to us what a successful venture that is, to demonstrate to all Albertans indeed that they are putting forward an effective proposal. Indeed, perhaps we won't see the full 55,000 jobs they promise, but perhaps with a 2 per cent cut we will see half of that. They can at least then demonstrate to Albertans that the gamble they wish to take is a valid one that will deliver.

This government has nothing to be afraid of. They will have ample opportunity within the next three years, after they have demonstrated the success of this tax cut, to come back and lower it further. All we are asking is that they show their due diligence and take the opportunity to demonstrate to Albertans how successful this proposal will be, a simple test of that tenet of faith, Madam Chair. We have the opportunity to prove that this invisible hand of the market, in fact, exists and, if trained as well as they claim it is, will respond in kind and will not in fact bite the province that feeds it. As I said, this is a significant gamble for the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. I imagine we're speaking to the amendment right now. I couldn't quite hear you. Sorry, Madam Chair; are we on the amendment, then?

The Chair: Yeah.

11:50 p.m.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you.

I just wanted to talk about a few things. My husband and my son just got home about 15 minutes ago from our small business that actually functions and is successful because of the multiple

corporations that have multiple jobs that contribute to the economy in the area where I live and contribute to the success of our small business. We wouldn't have a successful business if it wasn't for the corporations that have created the jobs in the area that I live in, in Chestermere-Strathmore.

A big shout-out to these folks who have multiple small businesses in these areas. They're super philanthropic and incredibly, incredibly savvy small-business people. In fact, the growth in that area – we're seeing, because of the momentum and excitement and changes in government, that people are really excited about investing, and small business has a direct impact. How it does, how it functions, how it works is directly related to the economic well-being and health of your corporations. All of those things work together. If you consider where we are with building roads in this province and building schools and the infrastructure that is needed in order to live the way that we do in this province, the lifestyle and the way that we all expect to live, nobody in this House should be condemning any sort of business at any time, ever.

We are built in this province out of so many different things, so many bits and pieces. It's a huge fabric. It's a tapestry of a lot of different things. A lot of farms would be deemed corporations because of the number of people that they employ, the types of businesses that they do. Many farms, actually, have multiple sides to their businesses and are under that umbrella of corporation. I would love to understand how those farms, farming communities, stockyards, all of those places, would feel right now knowing that members in this House have basically said that corporations are no good and are greedy. I would really love to understand how they would feel. I'm excited, actually, to reach out to the larger farms and stockyards. Strathmore is full of stockyards and large areas that would be considered corporations by the definition that was given by the member from Meadowlark.

These are families that I know and people who are humongous contributors to their local economies, the local people who own a car wash like I own. Those people come and wash all their large vehicles and trucks and everything in my little car wash, which would not exist if those large corporations didn't exist around me to make my business successful. So I am actually very grateful, extremely so.

We were talking about the variations in tax cuts and what it is and why we want to go to 8 per cent. Well, folks, we're still in a recession. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was just saying two days ago during question period that we could be heading to another recession. Those were her words. Then, on top of that, when you look at the numbers, this is exactly when you'd want to do a corporate tax cut, when you are in a recession. When there is an issue with the health of the economy, that's actually exactly when you'd want to do something like that because this is about actually attracting new business to our province. Unfortunately, what the opposition keeps forgetting is that everything that they did made corporations flee to other provinces.

Oh, and I feel, actually, like I need to give a small shout-out to the folks of North Dakota and stand up for them a little bit. I actually don't have any family or friends in North Dakota, but suddenly they became the beating stick of the opposition tonight. It was very interesting. I'm not sure what North Dakota ever did to you, Member. Anyway, I hope that they come and invest here because we're going to be open for business. So yea for North Dakota: come and see us. [interjection] It might offend the opposition a little bit, and I'm not quite sure what their problem is.

I actually feel that this province has so much to offer if you think about all of the incredible things that are here. Take, for example, the film tax credit that we're looking at. That film tax credit is going

to employ a ton of people that actually are coming from larger corporations: construction workers, electricians, all sorts of people that are actually presently employed in large corporations that might be able to do a diversified type of job in a really, really interesting and growing business opportunity. But you can't attract those types of things here without having multiple styles of businesses. It is actually a really collaborative piece between large corporations, small business, and everything else that goes into this. It's a beautiful mix, actually.

What we're trying to do is stimulate the ability to bring more people into the province, and hopefully, with the ability of actually bringing those folks here, not only will we attract large corporations but all of those small businesses that want to open up, all those entrepreneurs, all of those little businesses that want to open up. In Chestermere every other house has a hair salon or a lawn mowing business or anything like that. These are all little businesses, but guess whose lawns they mow? They mow the lawns of people that have large corporations, that are hiring them to come and do their job. It's quite incredible. Honestly, with all my heart, this is about looking at where we're at right now and during this time when we have an economic downturn to stimulate folks coming back to this province to make sure that not just the large corporations but all these other little businesses can grow as well.

For those of us on this side of the House that sign the cheques all the time from our small, little businesses for the small number of people that we might employ every day, I am extremely grateful to the large corporations in this province that have brought all of the people into my area that support my small business, every one of those people that have been attracted to this province. When you look at oil and gas, for example, hundreds of thousands of people, Madam Chair, came from all over the country and all over the world, actually, diverse groups of people sitting across from each other having a meal together, learning about each other, growing the diversity of our province, becoming friends, bringing our incredible resources out of the ground.

Then we have a government that comes in and says: "No. You know, we don't like oil and gas. We don't care about the industry." They align themselves with the Trudeau government to actually attack the industry, and then when we try to do something to actually attract those folks back, suddenly that's a bad idea even though those were the businesses that brought all of these people here who started all of the small businesses that are the heartbeat of this province. These are all these secondary and tertiary businesses that exist as a result of the large corporations that employed hundreds of thousands of people in this province, things that we should be grateful for. Unbelievably blessed to be in this province. To feel again this attack on business when, really, all of us consulted for 28 days just before April 16, every one of us at the doors, constant consultation, transparent ideas, nuanced policy that didn't overblow the idea or overstate what we're trying to do or pretend that it's something that it's not – it's an actual document that says what the potential growth is. What a wonderful opportunity.

Quite often when you're trying to attract people, it's based on the notion of hope and based on the notion that you have people that understand that hope, who know how to facilitate that and bring people in. It's not a divisive mentality. It's the idea of something better and something greater because we have faith in the incredible people that actually want to come to this province and function here.

My dad came in 1963 from India. He's a chemical engineer. You know, he went through several businesses, up and down, some large corporations he worked for, some of his own small businesses that he worked for. He is in oil and gas still. Even at this age – he's a

severe diabetic; he can't see anything – he still works on some projects because he's just a brilliant man, and people really appreciate his advice on some of the projects that he does.

12:00 a.m.

It's amazing to me that when I talked to him about the various businesses that he's been through, whether it was a large corporation or whether it was a small business, the impact that all of those businesses had – in fact, the large corporations that he worked for in oil and gas were the reason that he went to a small, private business, a little one. He was inspired by what these large companies could do, but he knew he could take his knowledge and everything he had learned there and create something incredible in a smaller engineering firm. He went from a place that employed thousands of people to he himself employing maybe a hundred at most at any given time. He was able to do that because he started in a place where it was a mortgage-paying job, something that he could do to raise his family and take care of people. He is forever grateful to those large corporations that took a chance on a young foreigner who came here with big ideas, just like so many Canadians come to be able to put their stake in the ground and make a difference in this beautiful province.

Do you know how many of those large corporations hire new Canadians? Think about it. We all have them in every one of our ridings. They're the first people to scoop up this incredible talent and say: "Come and work with us, and bring your family. You know, we have benefits for you. We'll take care of you." We have great schools here because the large companies actually, probably, helped build a rec centre in your area. So the next time you decide to criticize those large corporations, go inside each one of your rec centres and see who were the major donors there. Go in there and find out who put the money in to your swimming pool or your race track or any of those wonderful facilities that are in our areas and you ask yourself if you maybe shouldn't be attacking those folks because they're the ones who contribute in such a beautiful way to all of our communities. Not only that; they stimulate all of these other people to start these small businesses because there is this desire for competition and this desire to do a better version and to maybe even make it to the grand part of being your own large corporation. We've seen that happen here with small, little companies that suddenly took off and became these huge corporations that employ thousands of people.

I have to say that, like, the rhetoric around the attack on Albertans just needs to stop. Policy is one thing. Have at 'er. We have the responsibility to look at each other's policy, for sure. It's a really fair comment, and it's fair to be able to look at that. But the personal attacks and saying things like that, being of average ability, is a stretch. That kind of nonsensical behaviour and talking: we are much better than that in here. We have a lot of people in here who are all here for what they believe to be the right reasons. That kind of language and behaviour is not acceptable. Albertans heard you. We heard you, and I'm repeating it. Please, consider that every single human being in here is here for the right reasons, whatever the reasons are, Madam Chair, but that kind of rhetoric does nothing to build capacity, jobs, to elevate people, to make people want to come here to make sure that their government understands who they are at the core, gets them, understands how to inspire and make sure that we are out of the way so that these businesses can flourish.

I would suggest that, potentially, we could consider the policy versus the personal attacks. I think that that might be a better way to go.

As for the Member for Calgary-Hays, I would suggest that you're far above average, sir, and more than that, your working-stiff dad

makes all of us proud. We all have those dads. Thank you for your dad – my dad thanks you – and every other person who has a hard-working parent in here who probably helped get them to where they are right now, working in a job that may have been a small business or corporation, because we live in the best province in the world. I would suggest that we say thank you instead of attacking each other. Thank you.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. It was, I guess, interesting to hear. A lot of economists also kind of lecture about how we need to focus on policy.

A couple of things. I want to preface my remarks by saying that I'm not against any corporation – past, present, or future – so let's get that out of the way. Nothing against profit or North Dakota. I didn't go and live there, so that's out of the way as well. Also, when the Member for Calgary-Hays was speaking, it's the same election rhetoric: we are better at managing the economy; they are not. I think we need to move past that as well. We will not go on personal attacks or anything. Otherwise, I can say that the Member for Calgary-Hays said – and I paraphrase – that supports for persons with disabilities is just a giveaway. He said that those supports are giveaways, and he fails to see a \$4.5 billion tax break, the biggest in the history of this province, as a giveaway. That's shameful.

But I will talk about policy. I will talk about economics. I will not go there. In the last couple of months, I think the only notable incident in our economy was that the UCP got elected. I respect their mandate. They got elected. Let's get that out of the way. I'm not relitigating the election whatsoever. But where our economy was before the election: it's pretty much at the same place. What we are facing in our economy is that we do have enough product. If we talk about the energy sector, we do have enough product. We do have enough corporations that can pump more resources from the ground and that can create more products. The real issue we are facing is that we do not have takeaway capacity in our pipelines, we do not have new markets, and that's the objective reality of our province.

On that side we only hear one theory, that for the most part is trickle-down economics. My background is in economics; my undergrad was economics and my master's was in economics, so I can tell you that I know what I'm talking about. In all those years I never heard or read any theory that says that cutting corporate taxes generates jobs. There is no such theory in economics. You can prove me wrong. You can prove otherwise. The second thing is that there is no theory in economics that is absolute. Every single theory in economics has assumptions, and it's subject to the ground realities, the objective realities of the economy where they are applied. I will challenge you on that, too. If anybody wants to prove me wrong on that, sure. I would love to hear their arguments.

The ground realities, the objective conditions in Alberta are that we are blessed with a lot of resources, the second-largest resources on the entire globe. Whatever policy we bring forward, I think we can all agree on both sides of the House that our aim is that our province should be prosperous. There should be good, mortgage-paying jobs for all Albertans. It should create opportunity for everyone. It should create revenues so that we can support education, we can support health care, and we can support social services. I don't think there is any disagreement on that among the members of this House. I think we disagree on how we do it.

12:10 a.m.

All we hear from that side, again in economic terms, is trickle-down economics and supply-side economics. Theories which have failed in practice universally, across the globe. Trickle-down economics has failed. Even the World Bank and IMF: like, they are revisiting those theories. Henry Kissinger, who it can be said is the father of this kind of trickle-down economics, Reaganomics, those kind of things: even he thinks that we need to revisit trickle-down economics or supply-side economics. What, essentially, supply-side economics does is it encourages you to increase goods and services and lower corporate taxes.

In no way, shape, or manner will this tax break encourage any increase in our goods, for instance energy products. As I said, we already have the capacity to produce more. We have that capacity in the system without any new investment coming in. We have that production capacity. The crisis we are facing has bled off our takeaway capacity. And I do not see any link between this tax break and a pipeline getting built. I do not see that link. That is the reason, when we were in government, that we curtailed supply, because there was too much supply and there was not enough takeaway capacity. We curtailed it so we could get the differential down and get a reasonable price for our products.

The other, biggest problem with supply-side economics, the one that that side, the government side, is proposing, is that it always, always results in long-term deficits for the future economy. There are many examples that I can share. Like, the biggest one is from the United States. The United States has somewhere close to \$799 billion in debts, and after a huge tax break from this administration, the Trump administration, they saw a rise in their deficit. If the tax break was to work, they wouldn't see an increase in their deficit.

Deficit can come in many different forms. We had a 44-year regime here from the previous Conservative government. We saw deficits. They will say: we balanced the books. But the books were balanced by leaving deficits in our communities. The Member for Calgary-Hays would know that between 2008 and 2013 there was not a single school built in Calgary. Not one school built in Calgary between 2008 and 2013: that's a fact. From 2015 to 2019 we invested in 244 new or modernized schools. Those were the deficits that were left during the previous Conservative government, and that's what supply-side economics does.

On the other hand, I think there is another theory, called demand-side economics, that encourages that we increase consumer demand. How you do it is that you increase the wealth of those who would purchase goods and services from the economy. One example is that we promised in 2015 that we would increase the minimum wage, and that certainly increases the wealth for people who can purchase goods and services from the economy. The reason that demand side works better is that nobody who is making \$15 will have an offshore account. Every single cent they get, they will spend into the economy. I can say that from a theoretical point of view, and I can also share that because I worked for minimum wage from 2004 till 2012, until I started practising law. Every time I got a 50-cent or a dollar increase – I never had an extra account somewhere else – that was going right back into the economy. Those kinds of investments from the demand side do encourage economic activity, do recycle that money into the economy, and that economic activity then generates, I guess, conditions for economic growth and development.

Sure, it has its own flaws. It may cause a little bit of inflation, but at the end of the day I think there is more economic evidence that demand-side economics in the long run is better for the society because it also encourages discretionary spending. It also

encourages spending into infrastructure and all those things, which we have been doing. Anybody who created wealth in this province: they didn't do it on their own. I'm getting this from a U.S. Senator who said something to the effect that those who made money here made money because public money was invested in schools, public money was invested in infrastructure, and public money was invested in hospitals, in all those roads, bridges that everybody enjoys, that corporate citizens, individuals other than corporations, all use. So nobody became rich on their own. It's, I guess, a shared kind of effort that helps generate wealth, that helps generate profit. Nobody creates profits on their own.

If we look at this tax break in perspective now, it's not helping us with the objectives. It's not helping us with job creation. It is not helping us in any way, shape, or manner with the objective realities our economy is facing. I represent a constituency which has the lowest average income in the entirety of Calgary. In the city of Calgary profiles can be looked up as well. Certainly, people are looking for jobs. The jobs they are looking for: they need those jobs now. Here, just a half-hour ago, the Finance minister got up and said – and I'm paraphrasing – that this \$4.5 billion tax break will create jobs in '23-24.

I guess you talk about your mandate. People gave you a mandate because they thought we didn't create jobs and that you will create those jobs. Now, a month into your mandate, you're telling them that you will create jobs in 2023-24. So far, from other, I guess, proposals we have seen, bills we have seen, nothing is creating jobs. We didn't see it. Like, repealing the carbon tax: sure, that was the campaign promise. Albertans gave you that mandate. But, with that, there were 7,000-plus jobs. With that, there were many energy efficiency programs that were creating jobs across this province. What about those jobs? We have seen job loss, I think, because of these kinds of policies. Same thing with this corporate tax break. For any investment decision taxes are just one factor.

12:20 a.m.

There are many other factors that are at play. If somebody was to invest in Alberta at this point, in particular in oil and gas, I think that the first thing they will look at is: if they produce from Alberta, will they be able to sell it in Alberta? We are a small market. We will need other markets to sell those products. Do we have enough pipelines, enough means to get those products to markets? So far we are still waiting for TMX. We signed up a deal to transport 125,000 barrels a day while we are waiting for the TMX. What is the government doing? They cancelled that rail deal, that would have helped Alberta's economy by creating 125,000-barrel-per-day capacity.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

What did they do? They did exactly the opposite. They created, I guess, more issues by cancelling that because now we are even more short of takeaway capacity than we otherwise would be if we had that 125,000 barrels. That would have helped. That would have certainly attracted some investment. People would know that while we are waiting for a pipeline, we have some other means, that we can transport the products and sell them somewhere in other markets. These decisions are also not helping us find other markets because investors will only come and invest when they know that they can transport it somewhere, they can sell it somewhere. This decision is not helping us transport it anywhere or sell this oil product anywhere.

Another example. My colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar was talking about the Amazon bid, another business. One thing that was apparent from that bid was that we need to focus on tech

infrastructure that can support tech companies, tech giants like Amazon. No amount of tax breaks would have convinced them to locate in Alberta, the reason being that they didn't have that needed tech infrastructure. The solution to that was not to cut taxes; the solution to that was to invest in tech infrastructure. That's why we created those positions, those spots across all postsecondary institutions across this province. That would help us become competitive should any opportunities arise down the road. For some company who wants to relocate to Alberta, they will have that tech infrastructure. They will have that labour force that they need to support their operations.

Again, I think that no economist will agree that this tax break, subject to Alberta's specific economic conditions, will help Alberta in any way, shape, or manner. The Minister of Finance clearly understands it. He knows that it won't create any jobs till '23-24 or bring any investment. All those estimates that he presented were down the road three or four years. Albertans were looking for action right now. If we leave the campaign rhetoric, I think we would have been better off having those rail deals in place so that we have more takeaway capacity, and we need to focus on getting TMX built. This side of the House has put a lot of work into that, and we certainly hope that we will get a favourable decision. That certainly will help us.

But giving a tax break in the hope that that money will be invested back into the economy: I think government has no control on corporate profits. It's a free market, and you are champions of free market.

The Deputy Chair: I saw the hon. Minister of Transportation jump up.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise on this amendment. There's a lot said here today that needs to be sorted out. What was interesting is that the hon. member just talked more about economics than the previous Finance minister did in four years. We asked economic questions of the former Finance minister, and the best we got was the answer that beer is good. Perhaps there is a misalignment in the previous cabinet because the minister there certainly made a mess of the children-in-care file to the point where he had to get fired and a new minister was appointed. [interjections] Mr. Chair, I can hardly hear myself. But here's what's also interesting.

The Deputy Chair: I would just quickly interject and mention that in these proceedings every member has the opportunity to speak; therefore, if members have interest in speaking, then it might be more productive to ensure that those who are speaking are heard by the House.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't agree with much of what the previous member said, but I listened to it. I would hope for the same courtesy.

Now, Mr. Chair, what's interesting about this is that the previous speaker – he actually talked a little bit about economics which is, again, kind of interesting and quite a departure from what the previous Finance minister ever did over four years – spent the entire time on his feet arguing against a corporate tax decrease when, at the same time, the amendment by his teammate on the floor is for, wait for it, a corporate tax decrease. The folks on the other side won't even listen to their own members, let alone us on this side. There have been quite a few examples of them not listening to what's going on tonight, and I'd like to correct a couple of those things.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mischaracterized my remarks. I don't know whether he did it on purpose or not, but he

surely mischaracterized them. He took it upon himself to say that I claimed that corporations were the best citizens. No. I actually was quite clear I think, but I'll say it again in a little more detail to make sure, in case I wasn't clear enough the first time.

I was referring specifically to a small set of corporations that didn't operate in Alberta yet chose to pay their taxes here. Now they, of course, since they didn't have people working here, didn't depend upon the health care system or the education system and the social services. What's good about them, that makes them good economic citizens, is that they provide money for people who need those things. That was my point. Maybe I didn't say it well enough. I'll give the hon. member the benefit of the doubt. I thought I was clear. But my point was: corporations serve people when we let them pay taxes, we let them make profit and pay taxes and help pay for education and health care and social services and schools and roads and hospitals and things that matter to the people that we serve as Albertans. That's one point. That's, I would say, either a mischaracterization or a misstatement made by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that I'm just happy to correct.

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford chose to take out of context something else that I said. He said that – I have it written down here. Where is it here? Oh, I know what it was: that one of the reasons that we might want to try lowering the corporate tax is because the previous government actually collected less money after raising the corporate tax. I don't remember saying that that was the only thing they did. The previous government did lots of other things that hurt business and caused them to regret it. The carbon tax hurt business. The minimum wage increase hurt business. The red tape that they added hurt business.

There were lots of other things, but of course, Mr. Chair, the bill that we're on is specifically about the corporate tax, so I surely did emphasize that because that was on topic, because that is what the bill is, what we're talking about now, the open-for-business, job-creation tax cut bill. I surely did emphasize that because that is the name of the bill, but I never said that that was the only thing the previous government did to mess up the success of corporations. They did a lot more things to harm corporations than just the one thing. So I would correct that thing, that remark that was made by some of the previous speakers.

12:30 a.m.

Now, Mr. Chair, I also found it interesting that the previous speaker, the one with the economics degrees, was concerned about deficits, about creating deficits. He spoke as if deficits were bad, and I would say to that, "This just in," because for the previous four years the previous government didn't seem to be concerned about deficits. They seemed to be quite proud of spending as much as they could without paying down dollar one on the debt, yet today we hear a revelation from one of the members opposite that they're concerned about the deficit. We'll just be grateful that there is some learning going on. I think we could all take from that example and do some learning in this House because I would say that all of us can learn. All of us could learn yesterday, all of us could learn today, and all of us will surely be able to learn tomorrow. Tonight we saw a wonderful example of some learning that has taken place, with the concern about deficits.

Mr. Chair, speaking of learning, on the amendment that's here, the hon. member from the opposition that moved it is actually proposing taking the corporate tax rate from 12 per cent down to 10 per cent, which is what they thought was wrong four years ago, and they raised it up by 20 per cent, to 12 per cent. The fact that this amendment actually reverses the main piece of the government's platform in the previous four years perhaps is an indication that more learning is going on. Thank you, hon. members, although it

was probably painful admitting that your policy was incorrect. I say that, and the evidence that I use is what I'm holding in my hand, which I don't think counts as a prop by the standing orders because it is the actual amendment, that we're all supposed to have, that we're debating right now.

There's some evidence of some learning and some evidence that the opposition is starting to acknowledge that they've made a mess of the economics of this province in the previous four years because the amendment today actually would take the province of Alberta back to where it was before the NDP got their hands on the economy and gave it a heck of a shake and made a real mess out of it, leading us to approximately a \$60 billion debt, heading for \$100 billion, with almost \$2 billion in interest payments now due, just a real bad situation for Albertans, that we're trying to straighten out.

Now, Mr. Chair, the big difference between this amendment, as I understand it, and what is in the job-creation tax cut is that we want to take the corporate taxes down to 8 per cent. I think the hon. member making this amendment, while admitting that he and his previous government were wrong, wants to only go halfway. Well, here's the problem with that. There are 180,000 people out of work. Youth unemployment is at an all-time high. I guess the analogy I will give you is that if I give you four minutes, or four years in the case of the previous government, to tie knots in a shoelace, it will take me more than four minutes to untie those knots in the shoelace. I think that in general terms that is true. The previous government spent four years tying a knot in Alberta's economy, driving out jobs and investment and opportunity for young people and the bright future that young people used to look forward to.

I believe that with good policies it will take our government more than four years to undo the knots they put in Alberta's economy, which, I think, is why we need to go with where we're going with the job-creation tax cut, down to 8 per cent. This economy needs a big boost now to bring back some of the investments and jobs and opportunities that the previous government's policies ran out of here at such a horrendous rate in the last four years. I think we're going to have to try harder than just going back to what was a good policy. I think we're going to have to work real hard to bring that investment back.

That's the whole idea. The whole idea is to get Albertans back to work and provide them with jobs because that's what Albertans told us in the election that they wanted. They wanted to be self-reliant. They would prefer to make their own money and support their own family over being put out of work by the NDP government policies. They would actually prefer to pay their own way. To allow Albertans to do what they want to do, which is to work hard and pay their own way and make their own living, we're going to have to bring back some of those job opportunities. That starts with investment. That starts with corporations choosing to relocate to Alberta, and we have room for them, Mr. Chair.

The city of Calgary, I hope, will be happy. I haven't heard from them directly – I could even be wrong – but let me say this. I think they should be happy about this and probably the city of Edmonton, and the reason why is because 30 per cent of the offices in those towers downtown are empty. And who was in those 30 per cent of offices? Corporations driven out of Alberta by NDP policies in the last four years. Now the city of Calgary has got a big property tax problem because the property taxes paid by the 30 per cent of all of those office towers downtown are no longer being paid. The city is now looking at solutions, and I think they're finding out now that spreading that tax rate out on the other businesses is going to cause a knock-on effect that could cause potentially hundreds or thousands of other businesses not to be able to afford their taxes, and that could make the problem worse.

That's in direct contrast to what the Opposition House Leader said, that a few extra thousand dollars a month just means that maybe they need to manage their business better. I think that businesses in Calgary are finding out that it's a matter of survival. Frankly, that's kind of a crass way to look at it, to say that businesses could easily pay a few thousand extra dollars a month. It's easy, Mr. Chair, to talk about somebody else's few thousand dollars a month when you're not talking about your own few thousand dollars a month. I would suggest to the Opposition House Leader that if we were to cut any of our wages in here by a few thousand dollars a month or any Albertan's wages by a few thousand dollars a month, they would notice it. Many wouldn't be able to pay their rent or their mortgage and buy groceries for their families.

To take that kind of a crass attitude towards businesses, that they should just pay a few extra thousand dollars a month and they shouldn't notice it, is very negative indeed, which is why we need to create an atmosphere where businesses are welcome to come back, welcome to come back with investment, welcome to pay rent in those office towers in Calgary and Edmonton, welcome to bring back the oil rigs to put people in rural Alberta back to work servicing those rigs and then have people shop in the grocery stores and the flower shops and stay in the motels and keep the businesses going in rural and urban Alberta all across this province.

It's about bringing back the investment and the jobs. That's why we're doing this. That's our reason. That's what we told Albertans, and that's in our platform in black and white. I can understand that the NDP folks don't like it and want us to leave the knots in the shoelaces, through this amendment, longer than they should be there, but we actually have a mandate from Albertans to work faster than that, to get the economic knots out of Alberta's economic shoelaces faster than just going back to what was there. The previous government's policies did so much damage that we actually have to work harder to bring back those businesses, those corporations, those jobs, those opportunities, and that bright future for Alberta's young people, and that is what this is intended to do.

So, Mr. Chair, I don't think you will be surprised – I don't think anybody in this room will be surprised – that I will not be supporting this amendment. I will be very slow to take advice from the NDP on economics despite the fact that the previous speaker has degrees. I respect the fact that he has economic degrees, but the government he was part of botched the job on the economy, and they botched it badly.

But you know who we will take advice from? Experts, experts like Bev Dahlby, Jack Mintz, and others. When the other previous member from the other side, including the one that moved this amendment here, talked about, "There's no guarantee" – I appreciate that predicting the future is a tricky business. I've always said that if I could predict the future, I would be a lot more wealthy than I am today, and I think that might be true of all of us. So while we can't predict the future, what we can do is take good advice from people that have studied the matter and ought to be experts. That's what we have done, and we have been transparent enough to tell the public who those experts are that we took the advice from.

Mr. Chair, we did consult. We consulted with Albertans for a year or two before the election. We consulted by putting online and making public an approximately 117-page policy document, including the policy to bring in place the job-creation tax cut which is before us. It's our intention, our job, and, I would dare say, our responsibility to keep our promise to Albertans to pass the job-creation tax cut because that's what we promised Albertans in black and white. That's what we said we'd do. That's what they voted for, and, by golly, if we have anything to do with it, that's a promise

made, and I believe, when this thing ends, that will be a promise kept.

12:40 a.m.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, everyone else, for your comments. Being one of the newest members here, I'm actually really honoured to hear this debate go this long and this many points of view taking place and also some of the comments about our friends, neighbours, and largest trading partner across that 49th parallel. We're talking about corporations and business and how we got here and pontifications about the pros and cons and the approaches. If I may, since everyone seems to have digressed a little bit and given a bit of a journey or a story of how they got here and what the relevance is, maybe I can do the same.

I came from a small farm out west of Chip Lake. We didn't have much. We worked for it. The lessons of working on that farm, understanding what was in that area: we worked for it. Through small business and opportunity at the age of 16 I managed to come to the City of Champions, worked for a small paving company due to a connection that I made on that family farm. That connection had a gravel truck that was working for small business, another one, that gave me a chance to be a labourer on a paving crew. I credit Mr. Rick Aubin and Mr. Al Brown for giving this farm kid, who didn't have any experience in his industry other than hard work: go do it. It wasn't long that I didn't work for minimum wage, that I actually gained experience. Those gentlemen invited me back every single year to come and work for them.

After that, I went on to college and ruined their plans because they wanted to make me a paving foreman. But I went to college, paid my way through that. Then – what do you know? – they gave me another advancement, another promotion, and again more experience. Then I went and worked for another corporation, another Alberta-owned company, called Ledcor Industrial. I ended up working for them on a diamond mine project in the middle of the territories, where more men and women took me under their wing, people like Brian Kienitz, Don Ellis, John Madsen, people that saw something in this farm kid who, again, wanted to work, learn more, get more experience.

In 2003 I ended up starting my own little company. I had an opportunity to work for companies such as EnCana. There are some names out there like Gwyn Morgan. Somebody may have heard of him. They had to take and move a lot of their business, being Cenovus, down to the States because – what do you know? – we didn't respect business enough. We poisoned the economy to where it was in that state, until a bunch of us had to step forward. I ended up moving from that company over to another small company in Edmonton called Enbridge. That company had a major footprint across North America.

And coming back to the comments to our good friends in Minot, North Dakota, some folks on this side, being to the left of me in the NDP group, asked what relevance North Dakota has. They have the Bakken oil field, which was a major play in that area. We had to build out a transshipment facility because their product was landlocked, which happened to be a major boom in the Bakken oil field play. We were transporting that oil across the line into Estevan, Saskatchewan, to get it to a pipeline system to move it down to Superior, Wisconsin. Because of this land lock situation we then had to go and build a transshipment facility down in Eddystone, Pennsylvania, to receive that oil.

When the members are talking about transshipment facilities, oil capacity, rail capacity, and everything else, I'm not sure that they're aware of the full scope and the full breadth of how this system

works. I'm not sure that they understand that we're actually integrated with those partners across the States, that it isn't just us sitting on an island here. I find it very interesting that they're criticizing what we're presenting, what we brought in our platform, which we've seen as one of the key elements to help foster this economy, to bring that type of investment back, when they've actually protested against the same pipelines they were talking about building. I have heard lots of people in this room talk about building pipelines, but I have never seen one of these people out on a right-of-way across the footprint that I worked on proudly with those men and women, both in Canada and the U.S.

I'm going to drop another couple of names because these people are the ones that are actually in that industry, that support us and bring us along as Albertans across North America, working with our industries and with our partners. Leo Golden: there's a gentleman who has an economics degree. Tom Raptis: there's another gentleman with an economics degree. They happen to work for these major corporations. Al Monoco: he's the lead of that company. I met him down in Pennsylvania a few times talking about the efficacy of this project and how we were doing. Pat Daniels: there was another gentleman, with a very green thumb. He's the one that built most of the windmills and the power generation along that facility, including solar farms down in Ontario.

These corporations – we're talking about these alternate technologies – are the early adopters, before we even started talking about it. Again, their biggest output or biggest cost to running that system was electricity. They're the ones that manage those integrated systems. They're the ones that built the Montana tie line and also the 350 windmills sitting outside of Lethbridge.

Perhaps these other folks might start thinking a little broader before we start casting barbs. I do want to thank the members for Edmonton-City Centre and Calgary-McCall because these so far are the best dialogues and conversations that I've heard, that have had the most knowledge of the industry, and I find that those people are actually ones that I could potentially work with to do the right thing for Albertans, to bring across the attention to where it should be rather than wasting everyone's tax dollars talking about the consequences to business while we keep the lights on all night long. This is on camera, and I hope people are paying attention to it. This is how your tax dollars are being spent right now. And I am looking at you, sir. I am looking at you. This is what we're actually spending our dollars on, talking about the reasons and rationale of why we're here.

We're here to get business working. We're here to get the jobs going. We shouldn't be arguing about who's the best one for serving that, the person that works for the company or the person who started the company, because – guaranteed, folks – the Alberta advantage and the way that we do our business is that you start at that end, you build your own, and that's the dream. That keeps the things going. We all want the same outcome; we all want the same effect. We're arguing over the minutiae and the details.

So I support the bill, obviously, and unfortunately I don't support the amendment that was offered by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre although I do respect his speech on it, and I do respect your speech, sir. This is the type of stuff we should be spending our dollars on, and this is what the Alberta people expect of us, and I'm not going to waste a shot clock because, again, the way I look at it, being that farm kid that came up through business, I'm on the hour, and I want to make sure the people are getting their value.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that was something really interesting here. Really, I have to say that it's my pleasure to be here with you and with all members tonight because we are here doing our jobs, that we were duly elected by Albertans for. If the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland feels that he doesn't need to do his job because he can just go home and enjoy the rest of his evening, then maybe he should. Maybe he should leave it to the rest of the legislators, who think it's important that we spend our time debating the bills and amendments that we've been asked to do and sent here to do by our constituents. Maybe he should leave that important work to us.

Mr. Chair, I think it's something that is really interesting to see, the amendment here tonight. The bill is something that I think is commendable in the sense that the intent of trying to create new jobs is very commendable. I do need to commend the government for that. I mean, it's something that, I think, when we were in government, we tried very hard to do. We tried to support our industry and tried to create new jobs.

But I think what the amendment here speaks to tonight is something equally important. It's making sure that we get it right, and it's making sure that we don't mess this up, because this is legislation. It's what is going to become the law of the land. We're taking a pretty big gamble, and we're taking a pretty big risk. I mean, honestly, we're taking a 4 and a half billion dollar risk. Mr. Chair, through you, a 4 and a half billion dollar risk is, honestly, going to pay for a lot of schools, hospitals, health care, roads, and services that are very important.

So I think that the amendment being brought forward here today is very reasonable. It's something that says: maybe we should hedge our bets. This Assembly meets twice a year for a few weeks every few months here, and, Mr. Chair, if we determine that the gamble pays off – and I do hope it does. I hope that the government accomplishes their goal of creating new jobs because that is what we were all sent here to do. We were all sent here to try and do our best for our constituents.

12:50 a.m.

That's why we're up debating this at this hour, because we want to make sure that we get this right the first time. So if they can show that it works by first implementing it in part and if in part we can see that this amendment slows down the process, we as legislators can always come back, Mr. Chair, and make that change again. We can always come back and have that vote and have that debate through the fullness of this House, through the fullness of this Assembly, and move forward and have that debate.

I think that is something that we should expect of MLAs. We should expect our MLAs to want to come here and debate whether the policies that we have implemented have worked or not. If the government thinks that maybe that's not so important and they're going to get it right the first time every single time, well, Mr. Chair – I'm sorry to say that I don't have that much experience; we were only here for four years before – let me tell you that you don't definitely get it right every single time. You definitely don't get it right the first time every time. That's something that I'm afraid the government is going to learn sooner rather than later.

I'm afraid we're just trying to offer some really important advice here, and it's to take baby steps. Just make sure you go and you get it right. Go out and do some consultation. Don't rush into it. Let's talk about the issues and make sure we look at where it has been done in other jurisdictions.

We saw this done. I mean, right now in the United States, Mr. Chair, we see President Trump cutting corporate taxes from 35 per cent to 21 per cent. The President had stated that AT&T would create 7,000 new jobs. That's something very similar to what we're

hearing from the government side. I mean, the cut that the government is proposing is quite a bit larger in taxes. Really, what we've seen, actually, is that AT&T didn't create those 7,000 new jobs after those cuts. What they did is that they cut 23,000 jobs. There were 23,000 jobs lost after the tax cut was implemented in the United States. That's very concerning to me, and that's one of the unintended consequences I think this bill may have.

That's why I think this amendment is really important. It's something that allows us to go forward and say: "Let's start and see if it works. If it does, then we'll keep moving with it, and if it doesn't, let's back off. Let's take our foot off the gas and decide how we want to change our minds and how we want to move differently." That's, I think, what legislators are sent here to do, to make sure we're making informed decisions and that when we do make those decisions, we move forward in responsible ways.

Mr. Chair, again, it's really my pleasure to be here at this hour because I think it's important that Albertans know that we are spending the time to get this right. It's important that they know that we are willing to be here, that we are willing to burn the midnight oil to ensure that we get this right. If members opposite think that it's not important to get it right and if they just want to vote this through in three days, well, I think that's actually a shame. I think it's something that is really disappointing because I thought that we were all sent here to do the same job, which is to make Alberta better.

I thought we were sent here to work hard and make sure we got good legislation through this House and that we were willing to come here and debate the legislation, hence us being parliamentarians, Mr. Chair. Being parliamentarians, I think it's very important that we do spend the time here in this Assembly. That's why the standing orders permit us to spend the time in this Assembly. That's why the standing orders permit us to go and have the fulsomeness of debate here in Committee of the Whole today and to bring forward amendments like this. I think that it's very important that amendments are brought forward and debated in this House. I think that if the government so chooses and decides that they want to do it at almost 1 o'clock in the morning because they don't want Albertans to be able to see it on their TVs, that's the government's prerogative, but it's very important that we are here. It's very important that we are debating this.

I know that members of the government, especially when they were in opposition, were definitely people who brought forward many amendments in Committee of the Whole. In Committee of the Whole this is the opportunity to make sure we get those nitty-gritty details right. Those nitty-gritty details today, Mr. Chair, are looking at whether we want to move so quickly and so recklessly with a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to friends and donors of the government bench. I think that's something we need to be very careful about, because if it works, that will be one of the best investments that this government has made in a generation. But if it doesn't work, if by chance we get it wrong, I have to see that the government bench will admit that there's a chance that we can get this wrong unless they have a crystal ball that they're hiding in the lounge that I haven't seen yet. I wish I'd had that crystal ball a few years ago. But if they do have that crystal ball, then I would suggest that they should table it so that all members could have the benefit of being able to have the foresight to make the best legislation possible.

Mr. Chair, what we really need to do today is slow down. We need to look at the legislation and say: what are the first steps we should take? The first step is an incremental implementation of their plan here. We should look at it and say: what parts are important, and what parts are going to work? Then we should come back and review if they have worked. We know that this

Assembly will meet again in the fall. We know that there has to be a budget in the fall. We know that the Assembly will again meet in the spring of next year. We know that the Assembly at all of those times will certainly have the opportunity to bring back legislation like this again.

If members of the government really believe in being responsible, if they really believe in getting legislation right, and if they really believe that Albertans deserve to have the best possible legislation, then they would certainly give due consideration and indeed perhaps vote for this amendment. It's something that I think is very important, that we don't move recklessly. That's something that I think members of the government bench spoke to at quite great length while they were in opposition here. Something they spoke quite extensively about was that if you move too quickly on things, it is reckless and dangerous and can damage the economy in unexpected ways. This is one of those things where, if we move too quickly, it is reckless and dangerous and can damage the economy in unexpected ways.

When we move on risky ideologies like this that are untested and when they are tested, like in the Kansas experiment, and we actually see growth slowing down in jurisdictions that implemented policies like this, that's very concerning, Mr. Chair. It's very concerning that when we do test these things, it doesn't work. When we play with these risky, ideological experiments here in Alberta – and the government has the prerogative to do that. The government has the prerogative to implement their risky agenda. They have the prerogative to implement their ideology. That's what they want to do tonight, and that's totally fair for them. But if they want to implement their risky, ideological change, then we should at least test it out. Any good scientist would tell you that.

Mr. Shandro: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Happy birthday to the Member for Morinville-St. Albert.

The Deputy Chair: I will also take this as a quick opportunity to just mention that in the House the idea, for the most part, is for people to take a seat. In this situation you don't have to take your own seat. I should mention that I've seen this on both sides. If there are individuals that are looking to ensure that this kind of thing is enforced, just understand that it seems to be something that has been kind of in a bipartisan fashion.

Please continue, hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the hon. Minister of Health for his interjection, because it becomes very clear that the hon. minister would rather make jokes than do his job here in the Assembly and focus on the legislation we are trying to move forward. It becomes clear that he really doesn't care about the implications of what we are trying to do here. It becomes clear that the minister really doesn't think the legislation or the amendment is important, and I think that's a shame. I think it's a shame that the minister would get up and try to make a mockery of the process of legislation here, a mockery of democracy. That's something that all members should be deeply concerned about, that a member of their front bench would take the legislative process as a joke.

Mr. Chair, when we look at this and we see these risky ideologies being implemented across the United States and in other jurisdictions, we see it not work. When we see that the evidence points to it not working anywhere else, then when we're going to try and implement this risky ideology here, well, let's take those baby steps. Let's do what any good scientist would do. I worked on a science degree at the University of Alberta here. In sciences they always teach you: make sure that when you do your tests and experiments, you don't take your beaker and just sniff the entire thing right away. Let me tell you that I've definitely watched some

undergrads pass out from that. What you do is that you waft very lightly. You waft very lightly, and that's what you need to do when you take risky ideological experiments like this. You need to waft lightly. You need to take the steps, baby steps, and move in a slow, controlled manner so that we know that we won't be moving too quickly, in a way that could damage or make the hon. members across the way pass out. I think that would be something that would be a real shame here in the Chamber.

1:00 a.m.

It's something that I think is very, very important that we get right the first time. It's important that we get it right the first time because it's the lives of so many Albertans that are going to be at stake. It's the jobs of so many Albertans that are going to be at stake. It is this Assembly that is empowered – indeed, we have a duty, Mr. Chair – to make sure we get it right.

When we see members of the government and indeed members of the government front bench making a mockery of this process, I think it's something that we should all be very concerned about. We should be taking the time to take those baby steps, do the scientific work, and make sure we get it right the first time. I mean, when this is implemented, by 2022 Alberta's combined federal and provincial business tax rate would be lower than that of 44 U.S. states, Mr. Chair. That is quite a significant amount. That is, by far, the vast majority of North America, and if we're going to be moving that radically and that quickly in this dangerous, unprecedented direction, this unprecedented, risky, ideological direction, we need to be very careful.

We need to make sure that we get it right the first time. We don't want to be coming back here in six months and deciding: "Wow. Shoot. We got it wrong. We've got to raise the tax rate again." I mean, the Finance minister, I'm sure, would be very embarrassed if he had to come back and discover that no new jobs were created as a result of his cut or if the economy did not grow as much as his cut was supposed to do.

We saw that happen in Kansas when Governor Brownback said that it would be a real, live experiment. They predicted all this big job creation, economic growth, higher revenues, all this exciting stuff that, honestly, I really hope we can bring here to Alberta, but what they got was the opposite. They got slower growth, revenue drops. They had to reduce school calendars, pull back on public services. I think that would be the shame, Mr. Chair. I don't want the Finance minister to be embarrassed, and I don't want the Finance minister to have to come back and admit that his tax cut, his giveaway to his friends and donors, wasn't going to work, isn't going to work.

I mean, we're trying to make sure that we can get this legislation right so that members of the government front bench – I know that perhaps they think that this is a joke and that legislation is a joke, but I want them to make sure they're not embarrassed. I want to make sure that they don't feel bad about this in a few months, Mr. Chair. It's something that I think is really important. Albertans are going to depend on us in this Chamber to get it right. They're going to depend on us in this Chamber to be debating this and to make sure we get it right.

That's why this amendment is so important. If we don't get it right, we can always take our foot off the gas. We can always take our foot off the gas and decide that we need to make changes in our direction. We will be back in this Assembly again, Mr. Chair, I assure you. Unless the members of the government have something they'd like to tell me that I don't know yet, I assure you that we will have more legislation in the fall. We will have more legislation next spring. If this works, then that would be the opportune time to come

back and start debating this again and show the numbers and table the numbers and show that this worked.

If the members of the government are so confident and so sure that this will work one hundred per cent, then they should be proud to do that. They should be proud to come back to this Assembly and debate this again in the fullness of this House and in the fullness of committee and in the readings, Mr. Chair, to make sure that they can show that the tax cut created the tens of thousands of jobs that they were talking about.

If they're not so confident that it will and if they're worried about bringing it back to the Assembly and having another debate around it, then perhaps that's exactly the reason we need to slow down a bit, that we need to take our foot off the gas, that we need to be careful. And if they're not willing to be careful, I think that's something that Albertans should be concerned about, Mr. Chair. It's something that we need to be very careful around. They need to know that government policy affects the lives of every single person in this province. We know that when you move rashly and too quickly with these things, it is dangerous. It is something that we see not working across jurisdictions and around the world, and that's something that's very concerning.

I mean, when you look at the American tax cuts again – I'll go back to their federal cuts, Mr. Chair – we can look at the limited impacts on wages and hiring. For example, a Just Capital survey of publicly traded companies found that 6 per cent of companies were increasing their wages and that only 18 per cent were going to create more jobs. I mean, half of those were only through one-time bonuses for those wage increases. That's not anywhere near the projected growth of the tax cut. So when we talk about giving away 4 and a half billion dollars of Albertans' money, that's something we need to be very careful about.

I know that the members of the government have friends and donors who – and I don't want to presume anything, Mr. Chair – they may or may not have promised these types of cuts and who they may or may not have received big support from for these types of cuts, but that is something that we need to take a closer look at, get it under the microscope and say, "Well, if it works, that's perfect," because I believe every single member of this Assembly would vote to reduce it if it worked.

But that's what we'll decide when we see the results in a year. When it comes back to the Assembly, if this amendment were passed, we'd be able to have the discussion and see how it was doing. That's something that the government should be excited to be able to do. They should be excited to be able to say: "Look, our bill worked. We created tens of thousands of new jobs. Let's go out there and show the world." They should be excited to do that and have this debate again in a year and every year after that, Mr. Chair, because this Assembly indeed will continue to meet, as far as I know, in perpetuity and perhaps, hopefully, longer than I will be in existence here in this province, because we know this province will be great for a long time.

Mr. Chair, what I want to see is that as we move forward, we get this right. When you give away 4 and a half billion dollars to the wealthiest 1 per cent and to your friends and donors, I want to make sure we're not putting at risk things like classrooms and hospitals. I want to make sure we're not going to have to gut our communities. I mean, if that is going to be the case, if it is going to increase revenues in some way after giving away 4 and a half billion dollars – I'll point out that the government's own platform actually did not project that they would have net positive revenues for many years – indeed, then, we'd be very happy to support something like this. But I'm concerned that a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway means thousands of teachers being cut, thousands of nurses being cut. It would mean that we would have simply not enough resources going

to the facilities that need it, going to the services that need it, right here for families in our communities.

I think it's very important that we move forward and have these discussions right now. I think it's very important that before we rush through this legislation, we have those discussions. I hope that members of the government benches and perhaps the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would agree with me that it is very important that we do have these debates in the Assembly, that it is very important that we do get this right, and that it's very important, Mr. Chair, that we come here to do what we were elected to do. That's to debate legislation, and that's to make sure that the policy is right the first time.

Thank you very much. I encourage members to vote for this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members looking to speak on amendment A1 to Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act? I do believe that I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday rise, so he has the call.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is an honour to rise this morning, bright and early. Happy to be here with all of you. You all look wonderful considering what time it is and how long we've all been here.

Mr. Dang: You always look wonderful.

Mr. Carson: Oh, thank you.

Yes. I'm very happy to rise on this reasoned amendment, of course once again finding the soft spot in the middle. It probably surprises no one that I disagree with the premise of the original bill, which is why, I suppose, I can agree with, once again, finding a middle space that, hopefully, we can all agree on. I think that we were all sent here to be able to reason with each other, to be able to work with each other, and I would love to be able to do that. Of course, I've been reminded several times, or it's been spoken of . . .

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interject. I apologize. I just want to be clear that we are discussing an amendment to the clauses of the bill and not a reasoned amendment.

1:10 a.m.

Mr. Carson: Oh. Excuse me. To clarify: that amendment to the clauses of the bill. My apologies.

Let me go back one second here. We are reminded several times in this House every single day that your government has a large mandate, the biggest mandate in Alberta's history, but I don't think that should stop you from being able to find compromise where we can. Of course, when we were elected into government in 2015 under the leadership of Rachel Notley, we were elected on a platform that raised . . .

The Deputy Chair: Excuse me. I apologize for interrupting the hon. member yet again.

Mr. Carson: Oh. Excuse me. I'm off to a great start here, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: I believe that without even completing the sentence, you know that speaking about other members should probably be along the lines of "the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona." I believe that was who you were talking about.

Mr. Carson: Yes. That's correct. The Leader of the Official Opposition. My apologies.

Anyway, back to the point here. We were elected on raising corporate income taxes. It was a time when people were very concerned about, I suppose, the value that they were getting, and they felt that corporations should pay a little bit more to cover what we saw as a recession coming. Of course, that was one of the main reasons why an election was called a year early at that point, and citizens were rightly concerned that they wanted to have a government that was going to protect public services. I believe that that was, if not the main reason, one of the main reasons that we were elected into government in 2015.

Now, we come to a point where, of course, an election in 2019 had very different results. People were concerned, rightfully so. Over the last four years the price of oil has crashed, and it has hurt many families, families in my communities and families across the province. They wanted a change of government, and that is fair. That is the will of the people. Of course, not everyone voted in that direction, but many people did. Hence, we are here today.

I think it is fair, this amendment, finding a way to compromise once again. Now, the reason I support this amendment – and I think it's been laid out quite well by many of the members here today – is that we shouldn't move too fast. I have many concerns about what this means, the \$4.5 billion that we're going to take out of government coffers and hand over to corporations.

I think there are many other policies that I would prefer to see, one being the interactive digital media tax credit, that our government created over the last four years, another being the Alberta investor tax credit. All these credits give funds to corporations who, for one, can prove that they are creating jobs in Alberta, and I think that's a very important part. When we're talking about across-the-board cuts to corporate taxes, my main concern is: how are we going to prove that that money is staying here?

My other concern is: where is the money going to be spent? Is it going to be invested in the people, or is it going to be invested in things like automation and we'll actually see job losses in many instances? The discussion has been brought up several times this evening and over the course of the debate that stock buybacks were at an all-time high. The corporations in the United States: when President Trump decided to cut corporate taxes, many of those people did not invest those monies back into the people themselves but back into making more money for the stakeholders.

That's their right. I don't have a problem with businesses trying to make money. That is their role, just like the role of the government is, of course, to facilitate the ability for businesses to make money but also to facilitate regulations that protect people and also to make sure that businesses aren't taking advantage of people. I'm not assuming that that's happening in any instance. I have concerns when we talk about lowering the minimum wage, especially for youth, but when we talk about blowing a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget, as has been discussed several times over the course of this debate, no one has any real proof that this is going to work.

We've seen studies thrown back and forth from both sides of the House. We saw under the Stephen Harper government that these tax cuts made massive deficits, the largest deficits in Canada's history, I believe, and we really got nothing from it. I would prefer to see some accountability in how we're going to hand over taxpayer dollars. The people of Alberta have given our government the responsibility of investing their money, preferably into public services and not into massive tax cuts for the largest corporations in our province. But that is the will of this government.

Now, I would love to see, as I said, a review of this program to actually prove that the money is staying in our province, that the money is being invested in people and not in automation.

Automation is coming and, really, I hope that we have a discussion. I hope that the government has some plans around automation. That is going to be, besides climate change, one of the biggest market disruptors that we have to get a hold of over the next decade because we are going to see massive job losses. We thought the price of oil differential hurt us. Just wait for automation, because it is going to literally destroy certain industries and certain sectors, or at least the workers that work in those industries are going to see massive job losses. So I would love to see the government with some focus on that as well.

Now, just moving back to the amendment, once again, I think that we can agree that we're not going to agree, but I think that we can disagree without being disagreeable. I think that this amendment, once again, is a way to find some compromise. It doesn't sound like the government will be supporting it, but I hope that they do.

I imagine I will have more time to speak to the main bill and my concerns with giving away large amounts of money to corporations without any kind of understanding of getting something in return. Of course, we've heard unsubstantiated evidence, but we'll wait and see with that. I prefer to see tax credits that are proven to create jobs in our province, that there's an expectation that these corporations have to show their work at the end of the day.

Really, another program that a piece of this money could be invested in is the STEP program, once again, ensuring that students are getting employment, ensuring that the money is being spent where it should be. I hope that the government will support this amendment, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for bringing it forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: I believe I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West standing to speak.

Ms Phillips: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am very pleased to be at work at this hour, standing up for ordinary people. Indeed, urging some caution on a corporate tax cut of this magnitude, as this amendment proposes, is exactly the right kind of approach that might give some pause for a piece of public policy that comes with very little evidence and, in fact, evidence to the contrary that it would be effective. In fact, it's exactly that that was animating the hon. member moving this amendment forward. I believe he prefaced his comments that there is no way that, certainly, the governing side is going to agree with our position entirely, but what the hon. member was trying to do was ensure some level of deliberation and evidence-based decision-making, which is always a virtue in public policy.

I was curious. I've been following some of the conversation that has gone on in this Chamber at this hour around this amendment. One of the interesting things that I heard the Minister of Transportation talk about was sort of memory lane: let's go back down memory lane to the previous government. Okay. We can do that. Let's go down memory lane. It was that minister who was taking several runs at our economic record on this side. Sure, we can talk about how certain ministers, that is to say him, were the ministers responsible for the sky palace, that he sat around the cabinet table at a time when oil was \$100 a barrel, couldn't balance a budget, Mr. Chair, still ran deficits of some consequence, quite serious consequence. Oil was \$100 a barrel, and still no balanced budget, nothing coming from that side. That was the government that he served in. That's his economic record and, of course, the sky palace. That's certainly something to brag about.

1:20 a.m.

Mr. Chair, I've also heard a little bit of befuddled commentary about small business. Of course, the small business rate has been lowered by some 30 per cent. That happened in the 2016 budget. That was certainly something I heard from small business and I continue to hear from small business: that was a piece of public policy that did come with quite a bit of evidence that backed that policy, coming as it did as part of the reinvestment and revenue reinvestments of the price on carbon, which was, of course, a piece of public policy that is now prevailing in some 76 international jurisdictions.

The other thing I heard some commentary about was this idea that people on this side of the House are somehow insulting companies, and I found that very interesting as someone who sits in a caucus led by someone who stood on a stage with Canada's largest oil producers to announce a new phase to our approach to being competitive in a carbon-constrained future, in a future where climate change is real. Canada's largest oil producers stood with our government. Then something very strange happened, Mr. Chair. It happened when it was the Wildrose caucus and then it also happened with the new leader, and that is attacks on those very oil companies, those very job creators began to come from the Conservative side, from Conservative quarters, and in particular on Suncor, who employs some 12,500 Albertans – that doesn't include their associated contractors or their ownership stake in Syncrude – and some 10,000 employees at CNRL, who also stood on that stage that day. It was to the point where, you know, the media started to take notice of these attacks, at times quite sharp, quite pointed, at indeed some of Canada's largest employers, that were coming from the now Premier.

It was to the point that during the campaign there was an article by the CBC that indicated that "Alberta's UCP leader . . . says he won't take lessons from 'billionaire' oil CEOs" and that he then took runs at them, saying, "I know that from the comfort of the 40th floor C-suite of an executive office." It's easy to talk about these things, but – you know, these are just companies that are trying to make sure that they retain their competitiveness and are able to actually have a real and substantive conversation with international investors, and in particular institutional investors, who are asking about climate risk. This sort of arrogant "I will call [them] into the Premier's office," he said in this article in April by the CBC. "I'm not going to take lessons from [them]," he also said.

One of the experts that was called on for commentary in this article indicated, quote: having this direct attack against what are major employers, industry leaders, economic drivers strikes me as being inexplicable. The quote goes on: I'm a bit surprised that the leader apparently thinks he doesn't need them or doesn't need to respect them. That's an interesting contrast, Mr. Chair, to some of the professed rhetoric coming from the other side on who's on whose side. You know, I heard the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore talk about how she's grateful for the oil and gas sector, and so am I. This is how we put food on the table in this province, but clearly she diverges from her leader in that regard.

I also heard about better paying jobs as one of the rationales for corporate tax cuts and against taking a more precautionary and measured approach to this particular piece of public policy, and I thought that was interesting, Mr. Chair, because at the same time we are looking at driving down wages through scooping people's overtime or actually, literally taking \$2 an hour out of people's pockets.

Then I heard, certainly, people talk about economic growth. Certainly, again, just like my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford talked about, no one on this side disagrees with that in terms of

putting people to work and ensuring that we have a good investment climate in this province, that we are competitive, that we're diversified. Certainly, Alberta led the country in economic growth in 2017 and 2018, Mr. Chair. That's a sort of inconvenient fact, perhaps, for the folks on the other side.

But what's happening this year? Well, the Bank of Canada is forecasting pretty flat growth in Alberta and, in fact, is forecasting a drag on the entire Canadian economy due to the cuts to public services that are happening in the province of Ontario. The Conference Board of Canada isn't projecting a recession, contrary to one of the claims made earlier by the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore, the minister. That was incorrect. For the member's benefit and for the benefit of all members here, a recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of negative GDP growth. That's not where we're at yet. What the Conference Board of Canada actually reported on was that we are moving towards that negative growth because they had downgraded our growth forecast, as the Bank of Canada had.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The ATB, of course, cut our growth forecast in half recently, Madam Chair. That projection was also made at a time when some of the public policies that had been brought forward by the UCP could have been rolled into these forecasts. But they did not have the rosy view, certainly, of folks behind closed doors who generated the forecasts either for the platform or since. You know, the ATB flagged a number of risks, not the least of which is market access, which obviously is a key risk to the Alberta economy, which is why the line 3 delay again in Minnesota is so concerning.

ATB also put forward some fairly inconvenient facts, and I have to wonder if that was maybe too inconvenient for this government. I have to wonder about, perhaps, the fact that they have not projected robust economic growth in response to these tax cuts that have been proposed, that perhaps they'll take the Minister of Justice's advice, that he ran on, on privatizing 40 per cent of ATB, which I think would be quite a surprise to many members in this House's rural constituents, Madam Chair, and quite problematic for a number of rural communities where the ATB remains the only banking option or one of the only banking options and a very important one for rural development and growth.

So, you know, I hope that the government rejects the Minister of Justice's advice that we privatize ATB, just as the Minister of Justice rejected the now Premier's views on LGBT rights during the leadership race. They disagreed sharply.

Back to some of the evidence around these very Trump-style tax cuts that are being proposed. One of the reasons why the hon. member brought forward the amendment as he has, to urge some caution, is because the level of tax cuts is very similar to what we saw south of the border brought in by Mr. Trump. It certainly mirrors some of the sort of right-wing populist authoritarianism that is sweeping through western Europe and parts of the United States and, indeed, even parts of Asia at this point. We are seeing some of this sort of very radicalized, authoritarian politics take hold in the wake of Mr. Trump's victory, one that I know was celebrated by at least some of the members on the other side.

1:30 a.m.

You know, let's look at what happened after that very radical policy, brought forward by a very radical administration – this is an administration that certainly would make George W. Bush blush in terms of some of its extremely right-spectrum, authoritarian policies. The Congressional Research Service just put out a report very recently. This is one that we haven't talked about yet. Essentially, what they found was that annual growth was 2.9 per

cent in the year since the Trump tax cuts, which was the same as 2015, which was below the Congressional Budget Office forecast, that there have been \$1 trillion in stock buybacks. We've had this conversation about stock buybacks. Stock buybacks are a legitimate tool that many corporations, quite large ones, use. In this case, though, what it was used to do was to concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands.

Was there growth in wages? This was certainly the marketing technique at the time. This was how the policy was sold, and indeed it is how these economic growth forecasts and wage forecasts are the ways that the policy is being sold in this province, a very similar, Trump-like policy. Did that happen? Well, no. Wage growth was about 1.29 per cent, so essentially flat. The Congressional Research Service indicates that it is the same as it would have been otherwise.

Now, the policy itself generated 5 per cent or less, it is estimated, of the growth needed to offset the revenue loss. This is, again, one of the marketing techniques, one of the PR claims, one of the fact-free claims coming from the Trump administration, that has been peddled heavily by the government side as well. You know, it is up to them whether they want to copy the techniques and the use of truth and reason and facts and science that we see south of the border, if they want to replicate some of those attacks on our institutions, on our shared values, on what we know and what we know to be true. Certainly, they have not happened in the largest economy in the world, the claims around tax cuts that were made. What we have seen is a redistribution of wealth upwards, Madam Chair, and everyone else saw a pittance.

Now, I've heard as well a number of people cite the economist Bev Dahlby, which is interesting because Mr. Dahlby also authored a paper entitled 10 myths about carbon pricing, in support, a full-throated defence, if you will, Madam Chair, of carbon pricing, issued or authored by the same person who is now providing advice to the Minister of Finance and Executive Council and, I'm going to presume, all of government caucus on this matter of the overall fiscal picture. You know, some of the myths that Mr. Dahlby talks about are around jobs, wages, and that carbon pricing doesn't actually reduce emissions, all of these things I've heard from the other side. I think in this case perhaps they should listen to the expert that they are citing.

I've also heard them cite Jack Mintz. You know, I thought it was really interesting that Mr. Mintz was not on the blue-ribbon panel – I wonder if it has something to do with his full-throated endorsement of a PST – because Jack Mintz gets quoted all the time, but he didn't get to be on the blue-ribbon panel. I have to wonder if it's because he wanted to tie it up in a blue-ribbon PST, and that was a little bit too politically radioactive for the Premier's office.

Anyway, of course, Mr. Mintz is the source of the 55,000 jobs claim, which we don't see embedded in any other forecasts. Certainly, we don't see the evidence yet that any of that is happening. In fact, we've seen a number of indicators that things are getting worse, not better, since the election. We certainly don't see the levels of growth that we saw under our government in 2017 and 2018, when we led the country in economic growth, to review.

Now, it is true that the now Premier did campaign on a massive tax cut for the already wealthy. Absolutely. But where he wasn't as straight was on the consequences of that, and there was no quarter given to anyone who might suggest that health care, education, seniors' care, child care, any of these important services might be at risk. Oh, no, no, no. But we are already seeing that this is going to be the case, that there is no magic in a budget,

and when one cuts revenue, then one must take action on the expenditures side as well.

What this means for communities is that if they do need new schools, they will not get them. If there are new students entering grade 1, they will not have a new teacher. Communities like mine, that need to replace a 60-year-old bridge, may be out of luck. I don't know. For communities like mine, where there's a \$10 million new investment in a new assisted living facility over on the west side, the first one on the west side of Lethbridge, it may not happen. It may not. Increases to FCSS that are desperately needed by the city of Lethbridge may not happen. Any of the programs that support the arts: the arts is an incredibly important sector in Lethbridge. Lots of roots musicians, country musicians live there, even moved there in order to live there. Certainly, my riding is in need of new schools, Madam Chair.

That is why one might urge caution in order to find ways to pay . . .

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak on this amendment to Bill 3, as brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I was quite encouraged, really, to see this amendment, you know, in the spirit of looking for a practical compromise in order to do its best for Albertans. It's standard operating procedure to look for amendments to government bills. I think that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has captured the spirit of compromise quite effectively here with this amendment. I should be interested in considering to support it with some constructively critical analysis.

I think that what we do here in the Legislature is to look for ways by which we can help to backstop and support the economy and to provide regulation and stimulation for economic growth. Certainly, the tax rate is an important mechanism by which we can help to achieve that, but it's a very powerful, Madam Chair, mechanism as well, so you have to be very careful in how you use it. Certainly, adjustments, small adjustments up or down, in taxation rates are a normal course of action. What is not a normal course of action is to swing it around wildly, with massive changes either up or down in the tax rate, that can have serious consequences for planning and for the money supply, quite frankly, in an economy.

1:40 a.m.

When we've seen other jurisdictions around the world make substantial and swift reductions to corporate income tax, it creates a very volatile situation, where quite literally, as in the United States, for example, you have billions of dollars that end up getting stranded or, you know, sort of taken out of the economy, quite frankly, because a corporation is not a person. A corporation is a system designed to maximize profits for shareholders. I mean, we don't fault that unto itself, but you have to make sure that you are providing reasonable limitations on that, especially when corporations are very large.

The proposal by the government in terms of Bill 3 and the very large tax reduction that they are suggesting, I would suggest, is irresponsible. It's getting a very mixed reaction from economists and, I dare say, not a particularly enthusiastic endorsement even from our largest corporations that function here in the province of Alberta. Of course, the backbone of our economy is the energy industry and energy corporations that are functioning here. You know, I must say that over the last four years, working closely with the largest corporations, they have demonstrated a high degree of responsibility and forward thinking, with an eye to responsible development of our hydrocarbon industry and looking

for ways by which we can diversify that economy, too. When you're on the edge of the cusp of the need for diversification, it's very important to consult and interact with energy corporations – they're interested in diversifying as well, right? – but simply just dropping something like this Bill 3 onto the table demonstrates a singular lack of analysis and thought that I think Alberta needs at this point in time.

What we saw over the last number of years was that through careful incentives for diversifying, let's say, the renewable energy industry, we jumped ahead to become North American leaders in renewable energy. I mean, this wasn't done with a massive tax cut: drop it on the table, walk away, and say: here you go. It was done with careful consultation and interaction to nurture renewable energy. You know, it's almost like an action, sort of a direct opposite, when you look at the attempt to encourage economic stimulation with this bill compared to the way by which we managed to nurture and encourage renewable energy, right? The two things could not be further apart.

As well, I think that when we talk about job creation, we have to ensure that, you know, we are playing for the long game. It has to be sustainable over time. I can see or foresee in the way that this bill is written, without amendment, that it's very easy for the government to move backwards on the promises to make these massive cuts from year to year, such that the analysts in a given corporation will know, probably reading between the lines, that this bill is more for show than it is for substance. If the intention of the very substantial tax cuts for corporations here is to attract businesses from other jurisdictions to move here, then, I mean, again, Bill 3 does not provide the assurance that this is a long-term, substantial thing that can be counted on for a business to move here and stay here.

Madam Chair, I think that this amendment at least sort of tempers the magnitude of the tax cut, and I'm very interested to see how that might go. I'm interested to see how other members in the House might be responsive to it, thinking about it. We certainly have lots of time to think about it; we're not going anywhere. I guess what I would suggest is that we take a look at the full breadth of our economy, and part of that economy is the services for which the provincial government is responsible. You know, let's remind ourselves that, let's say, health care is not just an essential service. It is not just something that we count on for us and our families, that it's there when we need it; it is also a mechanism by which we can provide economic stimulus.

Education: same thing. In the vast majority of municipal districts outside of urban areas the education system is the number one employer. So it educates kids, provides an essential public service, provides surety and certainty and all of the other things that education does – order and so forth, a place for kids to go and learn – and it also is a big economic driver. In a place, let's say, like Parkland county, for sure the school system is the number one employer and was a very important backstop for families that might have had job losses due to the economic downturn and the downturn in the price of oil. So if you had someone that might have worked in the oil patch losing their job or getting reduced hours but another family member having a job in the school system, maybe a teacher or bus driver or custodian, then that provided the security for that family to see them through the tough times.

Why am I saying this, Madam Chair? Because if you take 4 and a half billion dollars out of this provincial budget, you have absolutely no recourse but to cut those essential public services. If anyone suggests otherwise, they are simply being dishonest or delusional or thinking in a muddled sort of way. There's no way on earth that you can take 4 and a half billion dollars out of the global budget for the province of Alberta and not expect to see substantial

cuts to education, health care, social services, infrastructure; all of the things that this government is responsible for. Bill 3 talks about corporate tax cuts, but written between each and every line is this idea that we take from one place and give to another. We give to corporations 4 and a half billion dollars essentially, and we take that from the public interest.

I've heard some members this evening talking about: well, you know, corporations have shareholders and we're all shareholders and the money gets stimulated back into the economy. Well, it doesn't quite work that way, Madam Chair, because corporations are very fluid. One of the designs of a large corporation is that they have interests and shareholders all over the world. Often the participants in a corporation, the shareholders and so forth, you know, may not even reside in the province of Alberta. So you take, essentially, public money or the responsibility for that public money, which would have otherwise been spent on public services that benefit the province of Alberta and the people of Alberta – you take it and liquefy it and put it into a big tax cut for corporations, and off she goes to the four winds, right? You lose control over that asset.

You know, I think that when you boil down the essence of who we are as Members of the Legislative Assembly – right? – that is an abdication of the basic responsibility that we have to the people who elected us to these places, taking that public interest, taking the essence of our responsibility and giving it away and just hoping for the best; hoping for the best but, I would suggest, expecting something less than that.

1:50 a.m.

You know, as I said before, I believe that Bill 3 is more of a way by which to demonstrate, I guess, bold action – right? – as part of the campaign. But the campaign is over, Madam Chair. The campaign is over, and now we get down to the business of governing. When we get down to that business of governing, you toss away hyperbole, and you toss away, you know, perhaps the heat of the moment in an election that happens over a 28-day period. You know, it's moving fast and furious and so forth. Then the dust settles, and you start making responsible decisions, right?

I would suggest that one place to start is to take a long, hard look at Bill 3 in a realistic way and realize that it's too far, too much. It has built-in irresponsible elements to it, and like I say, it is like an abdication of the responsibility which we have assigned ourselves through running and serving and representing the people of Alberta.

Thanks to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for putting in a reasonable amendment – right? – a modest proposal that I am feeling good about. I suggest that other members might join me in endorsing this amendment, perhaps speaking on it. Maybe we will get a few more, you know, sets of eyes and discussion about it, but I, for one, would suggest that I could support this amendment as brought forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment to Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. I must say to the House that I've been watching with much interest the debate as it's progressed throughout the day today. I have to say that I've been encouraged by the fact that we're actually having this debate here in this Legislature. What we're having is something that I've hoped to hear in this province for most of my life. I've lived through various forms of conservative governments for practically 60 years, and

I've heard various incantations or forms of supply-side economics being invoked by different governments, of course, by successive Social Credit governments and then in '71 by the Progressive Conservatives when they took over.

Basically we've had conservative governments for all of my life in this province except for the four years when we had that breath of fresh air with us and our NDP government, now the Official Opposition, but we're still fighting the good fight and bringing to bear this really interesting clash of ideas that I think will characterize this 30th Legislature for some time to come. It's a healthy clash of ideas, and I don't think we should suggest for a moment that this clash of ideas is something that we won't benefit from as a province and as a society because the healthy debate and real consideration of each other's views is something that can generate, hopefully, a better informed electorate and one that makes really good decisions. I don't know if, in fact, over the last 60 years of my life in this province, the electorate has had the benefit of the best information to make the decisions that they had to make when faced with each successive election.

I know that we've had successive conservative governments suggest that supply-side, or Austrian, economics, or Reaganomics, or trickle-down theory, or unregulated economics in one form or another were the antidote to anything that ailed us economically over the years regardless of what the circumstances might have been. In fact, they've all been discredited and continue to be discredited now as many speakers before me have so eloquently talked to in great detail.

I won't rehash that, but I will suggest that it reminds me a little bit of the advice that was given to my father – his name was Walter – who was a construction superintendent. He worked really hard, but he smoked like a chimney. He smoked three packs a day. He did finally have a heart attack at about age 62. It took him for a bit of a loop, but he hadn't quit smoking yet. When talking to his doctor – he wasn't a man who saw a doctor all that often, but after his heart attack he did. The thing that got him to quit smoking after he'd been convinced for so long that it wasn't an unhealthy thing to do was that the doctor said: Walter, giving you a pack of cigarettes at this point in your life would be like throwing a brick to a drowning man. That formal statement given to him by his cardiologist is what got him to quit smoking.

The reason I bring up that story is because it seems as though the continual resort to supply-side economics, or Reaganomics, trickle-down theories that successive conservative governments in Alberta continually come to as an answer to our economic ills, is tantamount to throwing a brick to a drowning man because, really, they are doing nothing to help the situation. The demand-side economic theories, which we espouse, characterized by a number of speakers on this side of the House, is something that is a different kettle of fish. I look forward to the debate over the next three, four years and the detail that we can get into in informing our public, the ones that we serve, as to the various, as we see them, benefits of either side of that economic coin.

So I don't disparage the debate we're having here today. I'm glad that we're doing it. It's something that this province should have had for many, many years in great detail, and we're going to be able to afford ourselves an opportunity to really involve a lot more people, particularly young people, I hope, as well as current economists who seem to be holding sway, to challenge each other's ideas and come up with something that Albertans can agree upon as a set of facts that show the way forward. I believe that demand-side economics, or Keynesian, if you would have it, is the way to go, where you do countercyclical spending, where you don't see taking

on some debt in a downturn as a necessarily evil thing. Everything within reason.

We were very pragmatic in our application of demand-side economics over the four-year term that we had. We didn't accomplish all we wanted in that period of time, but I think that Albertans, many of them, felt we were on the right track. We're going to continue to let people know what our goals were and also let people know how we feel this government is on the wrong path by following the supply-side, or Austrian, economic theory.

What we're ending up with as a result of this austerity is a \$4.5 billion hole in our budget, and it's going to be paid for by cuts to public services and public spending. I think there's a generation of people here in the province who really don't quite get it. I mean, if you lived through the Klein era, Madam Chair, and understood what the effects of this type of budget austerity really were, you might think twice about entering into phase 2 of the Klein era. I'm quite worried about what effects we're going to see.

In my own constituency I'm wondering about some of the expenditures that people were hoping to see. I know that the Misericordia emergency ward is slated to be rebuilt, renewed, a new one built. That was in the hopper, and people were anticipating the design and planning as well down the road. However, now people are wondering: is that going to happen? Is this government going to pull the rug out from underneath those constituents who are really going to be suffering if they don't have that upgrade to the emergency ward in a hospital that has even further need beyond the renewing of the emergency ward? So I'm certainly going to be monitoring that, and I can tell you for sure that the constituents of Edmonton-McClung are going to be up and seriously angry if that emergency ward is delayed or taken off the books.

2:00 a.m.

The same thing with the widening of the southwest leg of the Anthony Henday: there's a huge backlog of traffic every morning and every evening, both rush hours, on the Henday because there's congestion. The congestion is caused by a lack of capacity, and the extra lanes that have to be added in order to deal with that problem are something that I wonder if the Minister of Transportation is considering cutting from his budget to meet his 4 and a half billion dollar required offset.

Another thing: schools in my constituency, whether or not we may see a school built to serve the francophone school board le Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest. Il voudrait construire une école là pour servir la communauté francophone, qui voudrait étendre la capacité pour enseigner les étudiants francophones dans l'ouest d'Edmonton. I'm hoping that that school gets built in west Edmonton so that those students may actually continue to grade 12 and beyond in their French education without having to face the prospect of dropping out, losing all the education that they've had in French up to that grade 9 level because they can't conveniently go to a school that is in west Edmonton and follows the transportation routes that allow them to conveniently get to that school.

A lot of infrastructure spending, a lot of upgrades that are on the table right now that are in the planning stage are at risk, and it's an open question. It creates a lot of uncertainty in the minds of constituents who thought they had things finally coming that they've been hoping for a long time, that were needed for a long time, such as the Misericordia emergency department renewal, such as the widening of the Edmonton southwest Henday, such as the school for le Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest, which operates 19 francophone schools in Alberta. All these things in my constituency alone are compounded when you look at constituencies throughout the province who anticipated, under our government, finally seeing

an unlocking of their wish list and having things actually constructed that they have been demanding and asking for for decades. That perhaps will go up in smoke.

Unlike the life of my father after he got warned by the doctor that throwing him a pack of cigarettes would be tantamount to throwing a brick to a drowning man, we should be doing more than throwing bricks in the boat of the Alberta economy and asking that they actually be given a real life preserver to ensure that the services and public infrastructure that are needed, that they've been starved of for so many decades, actually get built and serve the public in the way that they deserve to be served by a government who cares about them as people and cares, certainly, about the economic system but that doesn't see the economic system as the priority, that sees the outcome and how that system serves people as the real priority.

At this hour, I think that I will probably let that suffice for my remarks and let others who wish to continue say what they have to say because I know that it's all important for us to contribute to this debate. As I said, it's something that's going to be revisited, quite happily so, over the next four years. We look forward to contributing continuously to inform the Alberta public as to the very, very distinct arguments that we have on both sides of the House. The nice thing about this Legislature is that we have such a distinct duality here, where there's a real clash of ideas. We look to flesh that out very, very deeply over the next four years so that when the next election comes along, there's certainly going to be a much higher, detailed level of rhetoric and, I think, a really sound understanding.

Let's hope that we capture the interest of the younger people in the province, those who are first studying, in grade 6, the government and civics courses, who visit here and get their pictures taken with us in the Legislature, who used to be introduced by us in the Legislature, who used to have the opportunity to connect with their MLA . . .

Ms Hoffman: You're exactly right.

Mr. Dach: Yeah. Exactly.

You know, those kinds of things are being lost. I mean, those students and the ones who later on in high school start talking about, in their social studies classes, the more political and policy-oriented subjects: hopefully, those students' imaginations are captured by a real debate going on and we talk about the theories that we're actually delving into rather than basically throwing ideological time bombs at each other. Let's have an intelligent debate about the pros and cons of either side of this coin. I believe that we have the better argument. Over time we'll prove that, and certainly you'll make every effort to prove your side.

I certainly hope we don't delve into the mudslinging and talking about one person's – well, there were some names that were called this afternoon that were unfortunate, and that's the kind of thing that we don't need to get into. I mean, I've been around long enough to have heard all kinds of conservative arguments, for almost 60 years. It's a breath of fresh air, to me, to have the opportunity to stand in this House, after first running four times to be elected and then the fifth time finally serving as government, now in opposition, espousing these arguments that I've been screaming in my own brain against Conservative governments for successive decades and now they get to hear and see the light of day, and hopefully influence a generation of young people to really think about who they vote for.

I know that there are a lot of people, especially those, say, for example, who are 15 to 18 years of age, who are looking at having the diploma exams count as 50 per cent of their mark in grade 12.

Believe me, that's a touchstone issue. They are ticked. They think it's absolutely, totally unfair, and those people are going to be the type of people that I want to touch with arguments here today because they're thinking out loud. They're thinking to make sure that this government knows how they feel. I'll tell you what: they're not feeling too warm and fuzzy about you right now, not if you're in grade 12 and thinking about having your 50 per cent diploma exam cause you all kinds of stress rather than having it at 30 per cent, the way it was before. So there's that issue, and there are other issues – climate change, the environment – that they're very, very sensitive about.

The Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Dach: Believe me, we're looking to cultivate that . . .

The Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Dach: . . . Madam Chair, to engage those young people . . .

The Chair: Can you please speak to the amendment and not all of the other things that happened during the election?

Mr. Dach: The amendment, that's what you're talking about? The amendment serves no purpose, Madam Chair . . .

The Chair: It's your amendment.

Mr. Dach: . . . insofar as how younger people will react to this government.

But, certainly for today's debate this amendment is not something that I can support. I'll tell you what, as a final tribute I would suggest that this brick should be thrown to no drowning man.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is always a pleasure to be with you at this hour and to be able to see you here in this Chamber so that we may move forward and do the important business of governance and debate here. I mean, I think this is a really important amendment from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I've already spoken a little bit about it today or perhaps yesterday; it's a little bit hard to keep track at this hour. I think we need to accept the amendment so we can pump the brakes just a little bit on this bill.

I mean, the Member for Edmonton-McClung spoke a little bit about some of the projects that are going on across the province. One of the things that I'm very interested in, Madam Chair, is looking at the impact of what fully implementing this bill without really thinking about the consequences, without really looking at the full impact would do, because it's a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to their friends and donors. I mean, that's something that's very concerning because we saw, as I mentioned already tonight, that in other jurisdictions it hasn't created the jobs that were promised, and it hasn't done those things.

2:10 a.m.

When we look at the type of giveaway the government is talking about, when we look at 4 and a half billion dollars just being given as a gift to their friends and donors, Madam Chair, I think that's something that's very concerning because 4 and a half billion dollars, indeed, would actually pay for an entire new hospital, perhaps a new hospital in south Edmonton that already has been funded for design. I think that's something that Albertans and Edmontonians would be very interested in and may

be a better use of funds than giving away frivolous gifts. I mean, if it does bring the jobs that the government proposes it will and has said that it shall, then I'd be very excited to see that money reinvested in building important infrastructure like hospitals and schools.

Unfortunately, we've seen, through things like the Kansas experiment, through things like how the United States currently is doing big corporate tax cuts, that when you give away billions and billions of dollars to your friends and donors, it doesn't result in more jobs. In fact, it can result and often results in a decrease in jobs, job cuts. We saw AT&T in the United States cut 23,000 jobs. That's something that we should be very concerned about because if 23,000 jobs were cut because of that here in Alberta, it would be something that I'd be very worried about and I know you would be very worried about, Madam Chair.

I mean, really, when we look at this tax cut, it's something that we need to be careful about. We need to pump the brakes and say: we should bring this back, we should do it incrementally, and we should be proud to be able to have the opportunity to debate it here in the Chamber, over and over again, every single year because taxes and bills and legislation are something that we were sent here to debate, that we as MLAs were sent here to have the opportunity to talk about. We are also privileged to be able to be here and have that opportunity to speak about how important this legislation is for all Albertans and how important it is that we get it right the very first time because if we get it wrong right now, this will have an impact for years to come, Madam Chair.

When you give away 4 and a half billion dollars, it has impacts that you couldn't even imagine. We can see what happened in British Columbia when, in 2011, they decreased corporate taxes by 6 and a half per cent. I mean, politicians, the Conservatives over there, said that it would pay for itself, but in the end it ended up costing almost \$8 billion to \$10 billion. Madam Chair, I know you don't like to throw away money, and \$8 billion to \$10 billion is quite a bit.

During that same time frame, when they reduced those corporate taxes 6 and a half per cent, the province's debt load doubled. It actually doubled the debt of the province. I know that members of the Conservative government here, the front bench and the backbench, indeed have spoken at quite a bit of length about how important it is that we tackle the debt. So when we're seeing other jurisdictions, indeed our neighbours just to the west, trying the same risky ideological experiment, actually failing, and not just failing a little bit but failing quite substantially, I'm really concerned about why we'd move forward so quickly on this ideology, why we'd move forward so quickly on this risky ideology. It's something that I think members of the Conservatives should be very concerned about. They should be concerned about increasing the debt load through this risky experiment.

I mean, we saw that in British Columbia, when the same type of tax cut was introduced, it actually resulted in out-of-pocket user fees for public services rising substantially. It meant that residential care fees for seniors went up. It meant that fees for people with disabilities went up. It meant that university and college tuition went up. Park use permits went up. Madam Chair, those are all things that affect families in our communities, that affect our constituents. Our constituents shouldn't have to pay for a wealthy corporate giveaway to the government's friends and donors.

I think it's something that we should be very concerned about here in this Assembly. It's something that we should pump the brakes on and take a look and say: let's re-evaluate and see if it works, because if we just start with a little bit and we don't jump headfirst, we'll be able to decide if it's working in a year or so. That

would allow us to say, "Oh, it's created X number of jobs" or "Oh, it hasn't created X number of jobs." Either of those are realistic scenarios based on what we've seen in other jurisdictions, based on what we've seen across this country and in other countries.

Madam Chair, it's become very clear that this risky ideological experiment the Conservatives are committed to moving forward with, this risky ideology that they want to push forward without any consultation, is something that could very well have unexpected economic impacts. It could have economic impacts that could very well damage our communities and could damage the lives of our families right here in Alberta, and I think that's something that members should be very concerned about tonight. It is something where members should admit: "Let's take this one step at a time. It doesn't need to be all in one omnibus bill. It doesn't need to be all at once. We can take this one step at a time, and we can come back and discuss how well it worked or how well it didn't work." That's something that I think we should take the opportunity to do.

Again, Madam Chair, we are so privileged to be able to be in this Assembly, to have been sent here by our constituents. We should relish the opportunity to defend our values and defend our legislation at every single opportunity. But it looks like the government would rather rush it through all at once and not have that opportunity to re-evaluate their legislation. They don't want to have that opportunity to go on and say: did it work? They just want to force it down the throats of Albertans, and I think that's very concerning.

I think it's very concerning that we're not able to just take a look objectively and say: will this work for us? I mean, we can see and do the research and say: it hasn't worked federally under the Harper government. I know the Premier is very fond of implementing things that didn't work under the Harper government, Madam Chair, but that's okay. We can see that it hasn't worked under the Trump presidency. We can see that it didn't work in the Kansas experiment. We can see that it didn't work in so many of the scenarios.

If we're going to move forward with this risky ideology right here at home, I want to make sure that we get it right, Madam Chair. I want to make sure that the members have the opportunity to re-evaluate this experiment, because you never jump headfirst without first testing the waters. It's something that we want to make sure we get right. It's something where we want to make sure that we don't create situations where there's dead money. I mean, it's something that we need to understand before we move forward, before we push ahead and without any consultation, without any reviews, without any thought. Before we give this big 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to friends and donors, we need to make sure that we get it right. We need to make sure that it's working and having the impact that it's supposed to have.

It's something that I think is very important. When we talk about impacts, the job impacts that the government keeps saying that it's going to have, the proposed jobs that it'll create, I want to make sure that we get that. If we don't have the opportunity to slow down a little bit, if we don't have the opportunity to re-evaluate this, it's going to mean that we don't have the ability to make changes as we need to. When we're playing with people's lives – and, Madam Chair, that's what the government is trying to do; they're trying to play games with people's lives here – it's something that's very concerning, that we're not taking the time to get it right, that we're not taking the time to re-evaluate things as they happen.

We know, Madam Chair, again, that this side of the House spent four years on that side. You need to be very dynamic when you're in government. You need to be able to make changes. You need to

be able to make updates to your ideas. That's something that's very important, because as you move forward, things don't always work out the way you expected. I'll be the first to admit that that happened many times while our caucus here was in government, that things didn't quite work out the way we expected them to. But that's okay because that's a part of governing.

I mean, the election is over, Madam Chair. What we are trying to do now is that we are trying to make sure we have strong, good governance for all Albertans, and to do that, we just need to slow this bill down. We have to look at making sure that it works first and then move forward and say: "All right. So it's worked. Do we want to keep pushing? Do we think we've pushed as hard as we can or as far as we can? Do we need to go further or not so much?" Those are all really important questions. Those are all really important questions that we should debate here in this Assembly after we've seen some preliminary results, after we've seen whether this big 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to friends and donors of the Conservatives is going to work or not. I mean, it's something where, if it does work, I will applaud the government.

But, Madam Chair, I'm very concerned that they want to give out this giveaway, that they want to give out this corporate subsidy, that they want to give out this corporate welfare without first evaluating the impacts. I think the amendment proposed by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre really does try to address this. It really does try to address how important it is that we slow down, that we look at the impact. Then, of course, it's the government's prerogative to bring a second bill again next year, once we've seen what happens, to be able to come back and say, "Oh, we can continue to make changes" or "We want to stop changes or reverse changes." That would be the government's prerogative. I think it's very important that the government has that opportunity to bring it back to this House, because we were all sent here by our constituents to make sure we get the legislation right. We were all sent here to make sure that we do our jobs and debate our bills, and it's something that I'm very concerned about.

2:20 a.m.

I mean, again I want to go back to the Kansas experiment. The state budget office's analysis suggested that that tax cut led to a budget shortfall of almost 2 and a half billion dollars. Madam Chair, I don't know about you, but 2 and a half billion dollars sounds to me like a lot of schools, a lot of playgrounds, a lot of nurses and teachers. That's what I'm worried about. I'm worried that if we move too quickly, we're going to put essential public services at risk. We're going to implement this risky ideology, this risky experiment, that has been shown in other jurisdictions to not work, without having some stops to make sure that we're not going too far. When we go out and do these risky ideological experiments, when we go out and push forward with our ideology, we need to be prepared to understand that consequences are real, that there are going to be changes that we can't control. That's something that I'm very concerned about. I think we need to be very careful and make sure that that risky ideology does not hurt ordinary Albertans like you and me. We need to make sure that that risky ideology does not go out and harm families in our communities.

I know that I was sent here by those families to make sure we stood up for them, and that's why we want to see the effects before we give a parade for this bill. It's something that's very important that we get right the first time. That's why you have to be dynamic, that's why you have to be willing to make changes, and that's why we need to slow this down so that we implement it incrementally. We have one step now, and then we bring it back to the House. We debate that change again. It's very important that we move forward and that we have that plan in place.

Of course, Madam Chair, you know as well as I do – and perhaps you know better than I do – that we'll be back here again in the fall. We'll be back here again, hopefully, next spring as well. Every single time we come back here, the government has the opportunity to bring legislation, and that legislation could very well move forward with these tax decreases that have been struck out by the amendment. If they did, it would be able to be considered after we saw the initial impacts of this tax decrease, the initial impact of this big 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway to the wealthiest corporations.

The initial impact: it's very, very important that we study it closely. When we look at the impacts in other jurisdictions, whether they're in Canada, whether they're in the United States, whether they're across the world, Madam Chair, we've seen that time and time again the risky Conservative ideology, the risky, ideological experiment has not worked. It doesn't get the results.

But it might here, Madam Chair, and of course the government has the prerogative to attempt that here, to play games with Alberta's economy and families' lives. They have the right as the government to implement their risky, ideological agenda on our families. That's the government's prerogative. If they wish to do that, I mean, of course they can, but we would like to say that we want to slow down and that we want to make sure we're evaluating what you're doing to families. We want to evaluate what the government is implementing. We want to evaluate how the government is performing.

I think that we as legislators, we as MLAs, sent here by our constituents, should be excited to be able to be evaluated by our communities. We should be excited to be able to take our legislation back and look at it and say: did it work? Now, the government, it seems, isn't going to be willing to do that. The government is not willing to have their legislation put under the microscope, and I think that's something that's very disappointing. I think it's something that's not conducive to the productive work of this House. It's not conducive to our democracy here in this House, Madam Chair, and that's too bad. I mean, it's something that I think we need to re-evaluate. We need to stop and say: is it fair that our Assembly won't have the opportunity to review the legislation again and again as we move forward with this risky, ideological experiment? If the government chooses not to, then, again, that's the government's prerogative.

But once again, Madam Chair, I want to make it very clear for every single member in this House: this risky, ideological experiment has failed time and time again. It has not succeeded, and I'm concerned that it won't succeed here in Alberta. If it does, I'd be happy to applaud the government on that, but we should have the opportunity to make sure that when risky ideologies are playing games with Albertans' families' lives, we have the opportunity to review that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to say to the Member for Edmonton-South: wow, you totally convinced me; I'm going to vote for this amendment now. Halfway through I was thinking I was going to change my mind, right?

Madam Chair, if you will indulge me, I'm going to do something that's a little bit unconventional, perhaps, for this House, not normally done. So I want to ask you to please bear with me for my time. I do promise you that I will bring it back to the amendment. I will bring it back to the amendment. I'm just asking you for a little bit of indulgence as I share something with the people of the House.

I just want to preamble this by saying that the way that we share with one another in the House is, of course, by talking about our values – talking about our values – sharing what we believe to be the way that we look at the world. Based on that, we support a particular ideology, and we support a particular way of helping people, working with people, doing things so that we decide on the policies that we want to move forward.

Some of you in this House may know that in my previous life I used to be a hip hop artist. Some puzzled looks looking my way. They're, like: "Oh, my goodness. Okay." One of the pieces that I wrote that really exemplifies the values that I hold as a human being was a piece that I wrote to my son when he was born, and I want to share that with all of you tonight. So please indulge me, Madam Chair.

This piece is called *Daddy Loves You*.

It seems like just yesterday your mama told me that you were on your way.

My eyes welled up, tongue-tied with nothing to say.

But mama knows that I was waiting for you every day.

I couldn't wait to be a father and bring you up in the

culture of our people,

teaching you about treating everyone as equals no matter what their orientation.

I thought about passing on my foundation that my father taught me,

growing up in a foreign place as a refugee.

All these things began to cross my mind as I worked every day,

slave to the grind, and I finally felt like I had hope.

The days passed, and I began to cope, looking forward to the future.

I didn't care if I was running upslope because now I had your mother and you

to keep my heart from falling apart on the days that it was too hard.

The days passed, and soon you were on your way.

I kept praying to God that everything would be okay.

And it was the happiest day of my life to see you born 9:05 on April 20,

and I knew that it was the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

I imagine you as a young boy now,

brushing the sweat from your brow on a warm summer's day,

coming home from school on a Monday,

telling me everything that you learned from the library books

that you returned because you know that education doesn't stop in the class

and that every day you must surpass the level that you reached in the past

no matter what the subject,

including respect and how to protect your mother, your baby cousins, and your brothers.

Because by this time you know that life isn't fair and that there are people that don't share when it comes to knowledge or wealth

and that health isn't just about the body, but it's about the mind, too,

and that you can control what you do, that you could do anything that you want to because we all have the power to respond positively or negatively to the things that we see and keep us from reaching our dreams no matter how far out they seem.

I may not make it to the day that you reach 20, so here

are some words, contemplate them plenty like the words of Tommy Douglas or Daniel Viglietti.

Son, you and I are part of a history, and your people have worked strategically to make it to the place in time where we are.

Your life is more than just about you. It's about our culture and what's true, like that every single person needs to be free, live life in complete liberty, and that's the reason I struggle, we struggle. Put the pieces together like a puzzle, because we're almost there, and never despair, and keep educating your mind and be aware.

But, most importantly, raise a family because we need people to become soldiers for the army of life. It's just because a group of people who live without thought believe that freedom comes from the things that they bought.

It's not that they're evil; they just don't know no better. But it's up to you to save this world, because if not you, then who?

That's the message that was passed on to me, and now I pass it on to you

so that you can see that every single living thing in this world is connected and needs to be respected.

Don't ask me what's to be expected because I'm still fighting the struggle, and I don't know how to win, but I know that it starts from within

and that if we do this, you and I will be known men to the people in our lives that love us dearly.

And this is my letter to you.

Sincerely, your father.

2:30 a.m.

Thank you for indulging me, Madam Chair. The reason why I shared that is because it shares all the values that I believe in, the principles, the ideas. I'll be the first one to tell you that I continue to be an idealist. I mean, you've got to be an idealist when you support the kind of ideology that I do, but you see in the underlying part of that ideology – I think that this is where we all agree, and I'll tell you this. One thing I want to share with you guys, especially you guys from rural areas, because I imagine that some of you like listening to country music . . .

An Hon. Member: Heavy metal, bro.

Member Loyola: Heavy metal? Okay. We've got a heavy metal guy over there.

I know that some of you rural guys like your country music. The reason I bring that up is because about five years ago I started listening to country music. I never used to listen to country music before, but then I started listening to country music. There were a couple of songs that just really touched my heart.

I truly believe that at the end of the day members of this House all want what's best for the people that we love in our lives. We all want what's best. We have different ways of getting there, right? I want to appeal to you. Just know that we may not be wanting to get to the same place in the same way, but do know that as we're in this House, what our constituents have asked us to do in being here is to represent them.

Now, I completely acknowledge that the United Conservative Party got its majority. You guys are government. You all are government. You're doing your best. You're doing what you think

is the right thing to do. But also know that we were elected by representatives to be in this House and be their voice. I know that it may seem like a joke that it's – what? – 2:33 in the morning right now. You know, people's eyes are starting to close, and we're debating and debating and debating, and we're talking and talking and talking. But we were elected to be here and represent those people. The good constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie decided to put their faith and their trust in me, so it's my duty to get up in this House and talk and share with everybody what has been passed on to me by constituents.

The reality is that my constituents – I'll be the first one to tell you. You knock on the doors of Edmonton-Ellerslie, and you see young families. A lot of those young families care about affordable child care here in the province of Alberta. Let me tell you that I had so many families tell me: "Rod" – oh, sorry – "Member." They don't call me "Member"; they call me by my name, but I'm just going to, like, parentheses that. "Member, it costs me \$1,200 to put one child in daycare." Twelve hundred dollars. I want you to imagine a family that has two children or even three children, right? Affordable child care is a top priority for the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie. I find it strange that nowhere in the throne speech was that even mentioned, affordable child care. I can bet – and I'm willing to put my life on it – that there are more ridings across this great province of Alberta where more families care about affordable child care. I'm willing to bet on it, bet my life on it.

Although I incredibly respect where the United Conservative Party is coming from – they're representing what they believe to be the right thing to do – let's agree that not only people that believe in the priorities and the ideology of the United Conservative Party live in this province. Our job – our job – is to govern together in this House, to make sure that all those people are represented, to take a balanced, measured approach towards moving this province forward. The amendment put forward by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is attempting to do just that.

Madam Chair, thanks for indulging me. I'm now on the amendment fully. You liked that, didn't you? I knew you were going to like it. Nowhere else are you going to hear a spoken-word piece at this time of the night. Nowhere, nowhere, nowhere. Honestly, that was my gift to all of you. That was my gift to all of you, or else we're going to ask the Member for Edmonton-South to get up and speak again.

Members, I say it in jest, but humbly – humbly – in all honesty, this amendment is about trying to put forward a more measured, balanced approach. Now, I remember being on the government side. I remember being a private member on the government side. I can probably guess that the majority of you are going to end up voting this thing down. It's a guess. It's probably a good guess. But I'm trying to appeal to your good nature. I know that each and every one of you has the ability to listen to reason. My good friends and members of this House, this really is about trying to put forward a measured approach, as was shared repeatedly by the Member for Edmonton-South. I'm just bugging; I'm just bugging. Why couldn't we attempt to – let's go to 10 per cent, and then let's re-evaluate what happens from there. Let's re-evaluate what happens from there, right?

The amendment being put forward by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is proposing to do exactly that. I remember that the Member for Calgary-Hays was saying: oh, well, it sounds like the opposition is listening. What we're trying to do is meet you halfway, to be measured, to humbly accept that, yes, we understand where you as a government, where you, ideologically speaking, as the United Conservative Party want to go. We respect that. We understand that. We understand. And we understand what your objectives are. By all means, I get it. We understand what your objectives are in terms of trying to create jobs in this province,

trying to do, from your perspective, what you believe to be the right thing to do. I'm not questioning that.

2:40 a.m.

At the same time, it's imperative – it's imperative – that you look at research and you look at data and you see what's been happening in other jurisdictions where they put in a corporate tax cut of this nature. I just want to share with you an article by Hugh Mackenzie called *Analysis Shows UCP Plan Will Not Create Jobs – I repeat: will not create jobs – or Increase GDP or Revenue*. In this article Mr. Mackenzie states:

In general, corporate tax cuts are among the weakest forms of fiscal stimulus. That's because there's no direct impact – the tax savings don't go directly into the economy, they go into corporate income statements – and the indirect effects are widely dispersed throughout the Canadian economy and beyond.

He goes on to state:

In the context of a balanced budget, the UCP's \$1.75 billion corporate tax cut would have a significant negative effect on Alberta's GDP and jobs. Because the cuts would inevitably be concentrated on public sector employment and transfers to people, there is essentially a 1:1 direct impact on GDP...

So the estimated net effect on the economy of the UCP's proposed tax cut in the context of its balanced budget commitment is a decline in GDP of \$2.7 billion and a loss of nearly 12,000 jobs.

Now, granted, you may say: well, you know, we have our economists on our side that are saying that that's not true, that that's not how it's going to happen. All the more reason for us to accept this amendment. Let's accept this amendment. We're meeting you halfway. Let's go to 10 per cent, and then we can re-evaluate from there if the desired corporate tax cut that you're wanting to put forward will actually do what you think it will do. Once we go through a year, then we can re-evaluate it and see if it's actually accomplishing your desired outcome.

Members of the House, I want to thank you for indulging me. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you a little bit about what my values are through that spoken-word piece. I'll finish off by saying: let's continue to respect each other. We don't necessarily believe in the same political ideology, but that doesn't mean that we can't show each other respect. What's most important is that we always stand up for the dignity of the human person, right? That's what true good governance is all about. So I ask us all, on both sides of the House: let's respect the fact that Albertans voted. Just because one party won government, it does not mean that all those others that did not vote for that party do not deserve to have their voice heard inside this House. That's the job that my colleagues and I on this side of the House, the members representing the Alberta New Democratic Party, are doing here. So let's respect each other, let's hear each other out, and let's keep doing our best to make sure that all Albertans are represented.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie referenced an article. Just make sure you table it at your earliest convenience.

Member Loyola: Will do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Excellent.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. Good evening. I'm not even sure what time it is or what day it is anymore. That is a tough act to follow from my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie, which I can tell you that I was listening to, thinking: oh, I'm so excited to go next and talk at 2:45 in the morning after that.

But I have to say that this is actually one of the joys, and there are lots of joys in the job that we have here. One of the joys is actually being here in the House at 2:45 in the morning because I think we can all say that we're doing our jobs very well.

But I actually have to say, and this is going to be related to what we're all here to talk about today, that I echo a lot of what my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie said. One of the joys I have found in being in this House tonight, especially in committee, where we know that the rules are a little bit looser and people have the opportunity to move around and to talk – and it's been quite remarkable to see members from both sides of the House sitting down with each other, chatting – and we've been bumping into each other as we're trying to find our next caffeine mix that will keep us awake but not keep us from sleeping in case we ever do get to sleep, and we talk about our children, and we talk about things. There's obviously an enjoyment on some of the very spirited debate we've heard here. We've heard some fantastic orators, some excellent points of view from both sides, and I think what's most important about that is exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was alluding to, which is that we are all human beings. We all do have a lot in common. It's a real pleasure to get to see that side of each other.

Particularly, we are fresh out of a campaign, and we know how that can be so divisive. In particular, it tends to do what we see happen a lot in politics, which is the us versus them. One of the messages I tried to convey when I was out at the doors speaking in Edmonton-Whitemud to what I hoped to be my constituents – and luckily they are – is that we are not as far apart as our politics or our hyper-partisanship or our media might make us think we are. In fact, that was one of my key messages. I had an opportunity to meet the other candidates in my riding from all the parties, and that was the note that I ended on. We had a forum; we discussed various issues, and what we found was really that there is a lot more that we have in common than we have different. I think the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie said it just beautifully, which is that we might have different ideas of how to get there, but we all have the same objective.

To that point, you know, I understand this is politics. I'm new at it. I'm learning. But we do tend to take very positional positions. We take very hard positions on things, and I think in our heart of hearts we know that those aren't true. We know it's not true, the way the media might characterize the differences in our parties and our platforms. Nobody on this side of the House is anticorporation. We understand that corporations are an important part of our economy, of our political system, of our fabric of our society. Nobody here would suggest that we could function without corporations, and nobody would suggest that we should do away with them.

Just like sometimes I think the members on the opposite side get characterized in a way that I think is not true. I certainly know that everybody there on the other side has families, have people they care about, so to say that they're not in support of health care or education is also not true. It just can't be true. We are Albertans. We function in this system. We all have our interests where we want to move forward and do the best for our families, and we know that all of those pieces that we're talking about – education, health care, corporations – they're not diametrically opposed. They just really aren't.

But we might disagree on the way to get there, so I would also like to stand up in support of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, an amendment to Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. I really believe that this is precisely that. It is a reasonable and measured approach.

We understand that we might disagree on the facts behind corporate tax cuts as ways to stimulate economic growth. I think my colleagues have done an excellent job of going through the various studies. I'm not an economist, so I'm not going to stand

here and try to quote with some measure of certainty or authority about economics, but what I do know is that I'm a person who trusts those people who are experts in their fields. I don't think it's our responsibility to be the experts in all areas. That's just simply not possible.

2:50 a.m.

I do rely on the experts when they make their statements, and I see, just as the members opposite have a number of economists that will speak to the belief that corporate tax cuts will result in economic growth and the creation of jobs, there are also going to be economists who suggest otherwise. The Member for Edmonton-City Centre and many of my other colleagues pointed out a number of economists who have expressed differing views on the value of that. I hope that we can agree to disagree a little bit. There are mixed views on this. It's not a science. It is not necessarily a true statement to say that corporate tax cuts will automatically create jobs, will stimulate the economy the way we want, because as much as the members from the opposite side might have economists who believe that, we've pointed out several economists and situations where that has not occurred.

Is one true and one not? No. Just like in everything else, there are theories. I went to school. I was a political scientist. I went into political science to get my degree, and that's what we sat there and talked about. We talked about centuries of beliefs, of differing views about society, about economic growth, different value systems, and one is not right, and one is not wrong. The truth is that at certain times one might be more appropriate than others, and we all bring our own values. I always talk about the fact that, really, where we are historically in the moment shapes which value system might take more precedence. That doesn't mean that it's wrong.

We know the pendulum swings from one way to the other. We've seen that. We just have to look at our own political history but also look at the political history of many other countries to know that. So one is not right, one is not wrong. I think what we can agree on is that there is a value choice being made here. Again, I echo the statements from my colleagues, that we appreciate that the governing party, the UCP, did certainly win more seats in the House, but the last time I checked, they didn't win 87. We still have 24 opposition members here who represent constituencies who perhaps valued a different approach. I can tell you that that was very much my experience in my riding as I mentioned in my maiden speech, a term I'm not terribly fond of, my first speech in the House, which was also not my first speech.

Anyways, my constituents don't subscribe strongly to one political ideology or the other. They're not diehard Conservatives. They're not diehard progressives or New Democrats. They've been everything because my constituents want to see a reasonable and measured approach. They look at what's going on in the political environment at the time, and they say: what is the most appropriate approach and which value system, which ideology – or not even ideology – which values do they think will serve their families and the province best? I actually really appreciated that because, when I'm going door to door and when I was talking to constituents, I'm a reasonable, sort of measured person myself.

I don't have a long history of being strongly attached to one ideology versus the other. I'm a person who looked at the values of the party that I chose to run for and thought – you know what? – that matches my values. One of the reasons why I was drawn to run for this party was because I thought they demonstrated a great deal of pragmatism over the last four years. They demonstrated that they understood what was needed for this province and its economy to move it forward and move from positions of ideology, from positions of strong partisanship, to say what is actually required for

governance. That's why I was attracted to run for this party, and when I went door to door, that's what I talked about, and my constituents agreed with me. They said: yeah, we like this, we don't like this; these are some things we think worked well, but we also don't think this worked well in the past.

They are careful watchers of political history. They lived through the Klein years, and they thought that, you know, in times when the oil prices drop, austerity measures did not serve us well. In Edmonton it took decades, and we're still recovering from that infrastructure deficit, that deficit to our public services. They care about that. They are actually quite centrist voters because they're also small-business owners. I have a significant number of small-business owners in my riding, people who said: yeah, things have been tough, but we appreciated that this government – the previous government, the NDP government – provided a 33 per cent tax cut to small businesses.

They appreciated, too, that there was an investment in new economies and new opportunities for growth because I think of main concern to them was that we need to get off the one-resource train that we've been on for too long in this province. They really valued the discussions that we had about diversification and the measures that were being taken to do that. That's what they were voting on. They were voting on: we wanted to have a path forward; we wanted to see a vision for this province that moves us forward and makes us less dependent.

One of the things that I struggle with when I'm in this Assembly – and I know we've all got our talking points on both sides, and we have our catchy phrases, and I will say that I know the government has done a very good job with catchy phrases and they really resonated with people – is the idea that the economic “mess,” and I'm using air quotes that won't show up in *Hansard*, that was created over the last four years was somehow created solely as a result of the actions by this NDP government. It just strikes me as completely surprising that those who might be knowledgeable of the political history and the economic history of this province would ignore the significant and repeated impact that the drop in international oil prices has on our economy. We've seen it hit Conservative governments. We saw it hit just before the NDP government took over. To say that somehow this mess was created by the NDP, to me, is just partisanship and ideology because we know that the reason why we are in the situation we are in is because there is too little that is in our control in our province. We've become an economy that is dependent on something that is too far out of our control.

To me, I think it's unreasonable and it's not measured to talk about one party's approach being the right way and one party's approach being the wrong way, particularly when we have tied ourselves to a system that is out of our control. What the voters in my riding wanted to see was Albertans take control of their economic destiny. That's what they wanted to see. That's what they saw the beginnings of, the investments of, under the NDP government. They saw that there was a true approach and a true investment in diversification, in new industry, and that's what they valued. I had a number of voters say to me at the doors, untriggered by me: we realize that this economic situation that we are in is because of measures outside of our control.

Now, what we can control as a government is how we respond to that. What I would say is, again prefacing this, I'm not an economist. This is just my sense of things, reading what I have read and talking to the people that I talked to at the doors. If we are going to tie ourselves to an industry that is so much out of our control, how can we then take what we do have control of, the revenue source that we do have control of, and decide to take such a huge gamble on it? Until we create some stability and security in our revenue sources of income in this province – and we are seeing that. We are seeing that

we have a great natural resource in this province, but we are having incredible difficulties getting it to market.

Again, all of the reasons that we're having difficulties getting it to market are things that are outside of our control. We have been so frustrated as a province, rightly so, about that. We can't get pipelines built. I will repeat the statistic that has been said over and over: previous Conservative governments have failed to get a pipeline built. I think it's 60, almost 70 years since a pipeline has been built to tidewater. We can't get our resource to market because of other provinces, because of the federal government, and for a lot of other reasons.

We can't continue to just simply rely on something that we have very little control over. We really need to take control of our economic destiny. I don't see it being a wise decision for the first step to slash corporate taxes by so much. I'm not an expert on whether or not that's going to attract investment. I see the studies that say that it won't create the jobs that are promised. I know that the members on the other side will say that there are studies that will show that it will create the jobs. That may be true. I go back to the comments from my colleagues that – okay – you clearly had a mandate to lower corporate taxes. You didn't have a 100 per cent mandate from Albertans, but you had a strong mandate, so do that.

But this amendment is a very reasonable approach. It is a very big gamble on our revenue source, when we have already lost control over so much of our revenue control in this province.

3:00 a.m.

To me, I think it's a very reasonable approach to say: "Let's see. Let's see if it does produce the jobs and the investment that we need – that we desperately need – in this province." This amendment is a way to say: "Let's try that. Let's do that – fine – but let's not tie ourselves to a very extreme and large gamble so early on. Let's take the opportunity to see how it works, and let's be forthcoming about it." Again, we get into politics, we get into partisanship, and we take strong views and positions on everything when, really, what we need to do, our responsibility here, is to govern and to govern in the best interests of all Albertans. If we're going to gamble their revenue sources, we need to be as measured as possible so that we can at least be clear about whether or not it works.

Again, the things that we care about, the things that all of you care about are health care and education. You have children who go to school. You need access to health care. I heard the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie speak about how affordable child care is so important in his riding. I'm very heartened to hear that as that's so important in my riding and to me as well. Those are things that, as we know, cost money.

The other thing that's important is that it's not just about providing those services, those health care and education services. The members from the other side talk a lot about jobs. Those are public-sector jobs. When we talk about, you know, perhaps doing away with \$4.5 billion of our revenue source, we can't even keep up the facade that that's not going to result in cuts. We know it's going to. We're not just talking about cuts in services, but those are Albertans who hold those jobs as well.

One of the things that really resonated in my riding is that for a lot of families who had two income earners in the family, one might have been affected by the drop in oil prices, worked in oil and gas and been affected, but often the other income earner was a public-sector worker: a teacher, a nurse, an EA. I think the decision by the previous government to not slash those services and those jobs was a way to also protect Alberta jobs. Of course, private-sector jobs are so important – I know they're important to the voters in my riding – but so are the jobs of public-sector employees, and so are the jobs of teachers and nurses and EAs and all of our medical service

providers. Those are Albertans as well, so we're gambling their jobs as well.

I would like to speak in favour of this amendment because I think it's the right balance to take. Again, I enjoy the ability at this time of night to have some free and open discussion and to find that common ground, and I suppose I'm standing here and hoping that there will be some agreement, that we can find some common ground. We're not trying with this amendment to argue to do away with the proposed bill. We're not arguing that there's no support for it. Clearly, there is. Clearly, there was from the election results. To me, there are a few examples of legislation that have come forward by this government in this session which are clearly part of the mandate of the government – some, quite frankly, are not; that's another story – and this one is.

I mean, everybody knew – it was front and centre – that that was the intention of this government, so I'm not here to try to say, "Don't do a corporate tax cut," because I know that that's a ridiculous statement. You have a commitment that you made to Albertans and to your voters that you need to keep. But we can certainly take a measured approach to it and make sure that before we make such a dramatic cut to the corporate tax rate, to our revenue income, we have given thought to whether or not it's working, that we do the proper evaluation to see whether or not it is working, and that the government be forthcoming and truthful with its voters as to whether or not to continue to go forward with cutting the corporate tax rate or whether to hold steady.

I look at this as an opportunity for co-operation, and I actually look at it as an opportunity for those on the other side who might be interested in perhaps trying to take back my riding in four years. As I said, my constituency is one that looks for a practical, reasonable, measured policy approach. I can tell you that if you want to win back the voters in Edmonton-Whitemud, show that you're reasonable, show that you're measured, show that you want to do what's best for Albertans, not just what's based on partisanship and ideology, and I think you've got a better shot in 2023 at my seat, not that I'm giving it away. I'll be fighting hard for it because I'm going to be the one standing up and saying: look what I convinced the government to do.

I'm just saying: look, that's what people want. That's what people want. They want a measured approach. They want their government – in campaigns they might want partisanship. I don't know if they wanted that or if that's just what they got. You know, when they see their government, they want to see somebody who's actually looking out for what's best for them.

So I encourage you to look at the idea of meeting us halfway, as the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie said so eloquently. Actually, he said a lot of things very eloquently.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

Mr. Guthrie: Yes. Now, bear with me.

Mr. Carson: Spoken word?

Mr. Guthrie: Spoken word.

Pack it up, pack it in
Let me begin.

[interjections] No, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that.

Thank you, Madam Chair. The opposition claims that we are talking about a theoretical policy with the job-creation tax cut. I think the empirical proof lies in the last four years. The NDP government rewarded Alberta with a \$5.5 billion increase in taxes that resulted in a decline in revenue of 8 and a half billion dollars. That's a difference of \$3 billion. Additionally, over the course of the four years the province of Alberta had a 3 percentage point

reduction in GDP, making us the only province in Canada with negative growth over that period. Let's look at B.C. They had approximately 10 per cent GDP growth in that same time period. Saskatchewan: they were under similar conditions to Alberta, yet they had a 3 per cent increase in GDP, for a difference of about 6 per cent between the two provinces.

So let's make it clear. This is not a thesis. This is not theoretical. The tax increases implemented by this previous government absolutely had a direct and negative impact on Alberta's economy. As a former small-business owner I can say that the job-creation tax cut alone will not do it. It won't because for companies that are losing money, well, they're not paying any income tax. They're just going broke. This is about an entire suite of policies that come together to create a positive environment for investment. It's the carbon tax repeal act, the open for business act, and the Red Tape Reduction Act in conjunction with the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act that will make this a success. I can say this. It is economics 101. The marketplace can only bear tax increases to a point before it has diminishing returns. The former NDP proved this point beautifully.

Madam Chair, as Forrest Gump might say: I may not be a smart man, but I know what tax is, Jenny. I'm trying to add a little bit of levity here, but it's no joke to the business owners that I talk to. I spoke to a rancher friend of mine. We talked about overall tax changes. He told me that the carbon tax cost him about \$4,000 a year. That's \$4,000 to heat his barns, his shops, to heat the water for the cattle in the winter, and he has no way to pass that cost on to the buyer. He's selling a commodity, so he suffers the loss. Is that fair? I don't think so.

I have another friend in oil and gas, spinning his wheels and his money. He was so frustrated with doing business in Alberta that before the election he wanted to leave the country. It was so difficult for him to do business. Here we are. We have an entrepreneur – he was born and raised in this province – who wanted to leave, someone with skills, capital, a strong work ethic. These are the very people that we want to retain.

This is what the NDP government did for this province. When I was in business, we took hits from the carbon tax, local property taxes in Calgary, income taxes, increases to the minimum wage, regulatory changes. The cost of business continued to go up while the economy went down; hence, our revenues declined. The NDP government continued to push forward with their agenda, and, Madam Chair, it was that agenda that led me to this place today.

I wholeheartedly support the original proposal and will vote against the amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:10 a.m.

The Chair: Members, I think that 3 o'clock in the morning is our finest hour.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment that my hon. colleague put forward. I'm happy to address it and pleased that members of the government caucus are rising to engage in debate. I do appreciate an exchange of points of view. I will disagree with a number of comments by the previous speaker.

I think, you know, first and foremost, obviously, that there's a recognition that the last four years have been very challenging – in fact, it's the last four and a half, five years, when the international price of oil was starting to slide, which all members should recall. That's why the former Premier, Mr. Prentice, called the election a year early. It was called after three years because he saw what all economists were saying, which was that the economy and the price

of oil was going to continue to slide, and he didn't want to call an election in the spring of 2016, when we would be at the depths of the recession. Again, he thought, I think, that things would have turned out a little differently. But that obviously had a significant impact on every single person in this province.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

If you look at the number of businesses, Mr. Chair, that only do business within the province of Alberta, it's a vast majority of them. When you look at how many do business across Canada, it's not a large percentage, and when we look at within North America and then internationally, it drops down significantly. I think the number of Alberta companies that are actually global market players is less than 2 per cent. When you have so many businesses reliant on and only doing business within the province, when the driving industry of energy takes a big hit, absolutely every industry is affected. We've seen the impact that that's had on families absolutely everywhere.

Now, as far as, you know, the proposal to drop the corporate tax rate: my caucus mates and I are putting forward arguments that it won't necessarily translate into job creation. In fact, this has been tried in a number of jurisdictions around North America that have dropped the corporate tax rate significantly, and it hasn't led to significant job growth. Sure, there will be some job growth. I don't think anyone is going to stand up and say: there won't be a single job created. That would be silly.

But my concern is that the projections are being overly optimistic in the sense, Mr. Chair, that from a number of businesses that I've spoken to around the province about the corporate tax reduction, although some may be excited for that, when pressed on what they are going to do with the savings – are they going to reinvest it back into their company, are they going to hire more people, or are they going to invest in new machinery and equipment? – I've yet to find a company that has said yes to those questions. Every single company that I've spoken with has said: no; I'm going to pocket the savings. Now, again, not laying blame on them. Understandable. The last few years have been very, very challenging, so they want to make up for some of their losses. I understand that. But that is where what the bill proposes to do won't necessarily get us to that outcome.

Now, again, I appreciate that the members opposite are looking at a number of their bills and not just this one as the silver bullet. I think, quite frankly, there isn't necessarily a silver bullet. I think, you know, it's a combination of creating the right conditions. But I also think that when we're looking at trying to attract companies, which we have over the last four years, in fact, some significant global players from Amazon to Google DeepMind to RocketSpace and others, I can tell you that on the tech side the number one thing that companies are looking for is talent and a talent pipeline to ensure that they can fill the positions that they need and that students have the right skills and the workers that they need to hire have the right skills. This is where it's investing in our postsecondary, it's investing in our education system to ensure that we are graduating the right talent to be creating companies and, obviously, start-ups and entrepreneurs, for which we did a significant amount of funding, working with organizations to provide mentorship.

You know, the two things I heard most clearly when I travelled the province, Mr. Chair, was that companies were looking for access to capital and looking for mentorship to avoid the pitfalls and mistakes that many new entrepreneurs face because they don't know. So we tried to address both of those issues, increasing access to capital through ATB, increasing access to capital by working with the Business Development Bank of Canada, but then also working with existing organizations and those that have the expertise – again, ATB was a great partner; so was Business Link

– to provide more mentorship and training opportunities for entrepreneurs. We do want them to be successful. I think it's a series of different ways to provide support.

We introduced three different tax credit programs that other provinces have enjoyed for decades, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, and were asking previous governments to introduce here in the province of Alberta. We've seen tremendous success from those programs. In fact, you know, in the coming weeks I will be asking the ministers if they intend to keep those programs. We've conditionally approved about \$200 million in tax credits, which has leveraged \$2.2 billion of investment. That's real investment being deployed right now, when it's needed, putting men and women back to work but also helping our companies expand.

We pushed the federal government on an accelerated capital investment – or accelerated capital cost allowance. Man, I can tell it's 3 in the morning; my brain is slowing down. I can tell you that we weren't completely pleased with the federal government because in the energy sector they didn't give a full hundred per cent of that whereas other sectors do enjoy that. I still think that there is a discrimination against our energy sector that continues to this day. I think, quite frankly, there's a misunderstanding in Ottawa about the Canadian and Alberta energy sector, how it's not just a driving force for our province but that, really, it's the economic engine of the country. So we will continue to try to educate our friends in Ottawa on the importance of this sector.

I mean, there are a number of other things that we did in the energy space for modernizing the royalty programs. Companies at first were a little hesitant when we said that we wanted to modernize the royalties. Their last recollection of this was under former Premier Stelmach in 2008 when they had started to move on modernizing royalties, to which industry panicked, and then the government backed down. But we wanted to award innovation and reward companies that are being innovative, recognizing that wells, depending on their lifeline, are going to have different production rates, and not penalize companies for not shutting in a well when that production level starts to drop. So we modernized it, and the energy sector was quite pleased. In hindsight we wish they would have made a little more noise and said, you know, "Way to go, government," that we got it right. We got it right because we engaged with energy leaders to say, you know: what do we need to do, and how do we get this right to ensure that they will continue to be profitable?

As well, you know, we lobbied the government on securing funds for orphan wells for reclamation. There still are a remarkable number of wells that need to be cleaned up in the province, recognizing that we need to get going on some of those. Again, at a time when we had a lot of men and women with significant training looking for work, it was a great solution to get them back to work.

You know, I think, Mr. Chair, the crux of the challenge that we have in supporting this bill is that, again, there is no guarantee that there will be significant job creation through cutting the corporate tax rate. I know that my colleagues have cited examples such as Kansas, where they significantly cut their corporate tax rate for a period of years, which had little impact on the economy but ended up tanking their government revenues, and they had to reverse course.

3:20 a.m.

I think, you know, the amendment slows down the reduction in corporate taxes – instead of 12 percent to 8 over a period of years, it's from 12 to 10 – basically providing the government with an opportunity to hit the pause button, to look at the program: okay; over the course of a couple of years let's see how many new jobs were created. Now, I appreciate, you know, that this isn't in

isolation, so the job numbers won't directly correlate to this one program, but I think it does give government the opportunity to look at: is this the best tool?

I mean, the trade-off, quite frankly, Mr. Chair – and I think we used the government's numbers. We've estimated that it'll cost about 4 and a half billion dollars to do this. I don't know if anyone can stand in this House and say that this is the best tool to get us the results that we want. I appreciate that some economists will say yes, this is. I can show you a number of economists that will say no, actually, it's not.

This is part of the reason, quite frankly, that when we first introduced our investor tax credit and capital investment tax credit, they were introduced only for a period of a couple of years, and we did an ongoing assessment of the program to see: is it actually delivering the outcomes that we want? I'll even back up before then, Mr. Chair. We initially were going to introduce, some members may recall, the job-creation incentive program, or JCIP, which originally was going to reward employers with I think it was about \$5,000 per new employee hired. You know, it may sound like a great idea in theory, but when we went out and talked to companies, they said: this is not going to get you the results that you're looking for.

That program was designed in conjunction with industry but obviously had some wrinkles. When we took it to the broader public, they said: this isn't going to get you what you want. I'm proud of the fact that we said: "Okay. Well, we're not just going to charge forward with it." This is, I think, sometimes for me the challenge in this place, when parties say, "It was in our platform; we're full steam ahead plowing through it." Well, you know, maybe some ideas in a platform weren't fully either costed out or thought through. You know, I think it's commendable for a government to say: let's double-check this, and let's do an ongoing evaluation of it to see if it's delivering the outcomes that we want; if it's not, then let's look at making some changes.

On that example of the job-creation incentive program, we pulled it. We pulled it before we implemented it, went back out, and did more consulting. That's where chambers of commerce, economic development associations, businesses from sole proprietors and entrepreneurs up to multinationals – well, multinationals wouldn't qualify for the investor tax credit, but for the capital investment tax credit they would – said that these are two much better tools that will help you get the results that you're looking for, which is job creation and economic stimulation. So we introduced those, and after a period of two years we decided to recapitalize those two programs because of how successful they were.

In listening to a number of our colleagues during their maiden speeches, one or two of the members talked about Seven Generations, which is a company that I have a great deal of respect for that operates facilities near Grande Prairie. I was very proud of the fact that they applied and qualified for the capital investment tax credit on their expansion of their facility. You know, there are a number of companies that have said that that program was the difference between pulling the trigger on investing dollars now versus those dollars sitting on the sidelines.

I think, Mr. Chair, that it would be prudent for this House to accept this amendment, which, again, taps the brakes on this program and allows the government to do an assessment of whether or not, you know, dropping the corporate tax rate is going to give the results that they're looking for or if these new-found tax savings are just going to go into the pockets of the folks that are receiving them and will not be reinvested back into the economy through job creation, through investment in machinery and equipment.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

With that, Madam Chair, I will recommend and urge all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this amendment.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:25 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, just a friendly reminder to all in this House: you must be in your own seat for the vote to take place.

For the motion:

Bilous	Deol	Pancholi
Carson	Eggen	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Aheer	LaGrange	Reid
Allard	Loewen	Rowswell
Amery	Long	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Milliken	Schow
Copping	Nally	Schulz
Getson	Neudorf	Shandro
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Sigurdson, R.J.
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Issik	Panda	Williams
Jones		

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 3. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? The motion is carried.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 2

An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Debate adjourned June 5]

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise, not necessarily shine at this point in the morning but certainly to rise, and speak to Bill 2. Now, my colleagues have had the opportunity, I think, to lay out several of the concerns that our caucus has with this particular bill, the steps it takes to roll back, I think, the important things that we had moved forward for workers in this province.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I remember when we first came into this House to begin to look at changes to the labour code in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. As has been noted by my colleagues, those were changes that were long, long overdue. Previous Conservative governments had, as they had on so many things, studied things and then stepped back and decided not to act and then studied them again and then decided not to act. We saw that with farm workers' safety: over a decade of consultation in this province, of talking with farmers, ranchers, individuals, and numerous reports that were all simply shelved and put away.

Now, we have talked a good deal in this House, Mr. Speaker, about balance. We heard today about the essential need to roll back protections that are in place for LGBTQ students and their right to form a GSA today because we needed to have balance. The minister has not been able to define what she means by balance, but in general the concept is that you have competing interests, that you have two different sides that you need to consider. So when we are talking about labour legislation, we are talking about balance. It's unfortunate, but for many, many, many years Conservative governments in this province were not concerned about balance; they were concerned about the next electoral cycle. They were concerned about their donations that would be coming in because that was, of course, before we brought in legislation, as our first act of government, ending corporate and union donations to political parties.

That was the first step, Mr. Speaker, towards trying to bring a bit more balance into how we approach labour legislation in this place. And I remember over the years the attacks that were made by government on labour in this province. As other colleagues have noted, we've heard the kind of language that gets used when we're talking about the labour movement in this province, talk about union thugs, other loaded terms. Certainly, if we go back to the annals of *Hansard* during the last four years and at some times like this, indeed, when we were here in the early hours of the morning, I can tell you that there is some colourful, colourful language from now members of the government, who were in opposition at the time, giving their thoughts on unions and the labour movement in this province.

We may not agree on all fronts with everything that unions would ask for or necessarily how they would go about asking for them. But, ultimately, we have to acknowledge that unions have served an important role in our labour movement in providing for workers' rights, and indeed we have to recognize that if they had not stepped forward, there would be many rights that workers enjoy today that they would not have because, to be frank, businesses were not just about to hand those over to them just out of the kindness of their hearts.

Now, that is not to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am antibusiness, as was suggested earlier this evening as we were debating Bill 3 by the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore. I certainly recognize that she took exception to some of the comments that some other members of this House had made. She interpreted them a particular way. I can tell you that, for my own part, Mr. Speaker, I have made no such comments.

3:50 a.m.

Indeed, I support business, and I appreciate the many businesses that contribute to the vibrant constituency of Edmonton-City Centre. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have seen incredible growth in the downtown core here in Edmonton over the last few years, and a lot of that has been because we've seen increased business investment but also because we have taken the time to work to build livable communities, to think about the people that live here as well as the businesses that operate here, and made investments in things like, yes, that Conservative bugaboo, bike lanes, in creating more walkable neighbourhoods, and other things which contribute to the vitality and make it easier for people to access businesses and better opportunities to get around, because these things are all of a piece. Again, it's about balance.

Now, I think there is clearly some disagreement between our side of the House and the government side of the House as to where the proper balance should lie on a few particular pieces, which is why we have this bill in front of us here, where the government feels that we have put too much of a burden on businesses in order to give employees the same rights and opportunities that they have in every other province in Canada, so on things like holiday pay, which, again, is something that was a relic here in the province of Alberta, that previous governments simply chose not to address for years.

I can't tell you the number of times, Mr. Speaker, over the last four years that I had conversations with people, and they said, "Why is something this way?" and I said, "Well, you know, Alberta is the only province in Canada that..." – and generally these were not positive things. Our government worked hard over the last four years to try to help us catch up. We heard members of the government this evening defending the fact that they feel that we have to have the lowest corporate tax in Canada. It's not good enough to be equal to other provinces or a little bit below. It has to be well below. It has to be the best.

Yet for our workers, Mr. Speaker, the same government is saying that they should make do with second best. That, to me, is not balance. Workers in Alberta have every right to be able to enjoy a Christmas holiday, just like they would if they worked in Manitoba, if they worked in Saskatchewan or any other province in Canada. There is no reason to deny them that. The fact that previous governments failed to provide that and that they set a standard that was substandard is no excuse to now decide that we need to all of a sudden roll that back.

Workers in Alberta deserve to have it. I hate to think where we would be if we had had another Conservative government over the last four years. Would workers have actually gotten the bereavement leave that is now available to them on a level with other provinces? Would workers still be left in the position where, if they took sick leave to care for their family, they could be fired from their job? Conservative governments just let that one lie. That was not balance, Mr. Speaker.

To insist that the only way for business to succeed is for us to roll back opportunities and protections for workers, that the only way for businesses to succeed is for young people to be paid \$2 less an hour – let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that here in my constituency I have organizations like Boyle Street Education Centre. They work to support youth who've been struggling, marginalized youth, high-risk youth. They provide a flexible schooling system. It is a charter school, an excellent use of the charter school model, to provide flexible education that allows those students to be able to access school in an environment where they feel comfortable. Do you know how many of those students also have to work to make a living, are struggling, and may not have the support of family? And this government wants to reduce the wage that they are able to earn to support themselves by \$2 an hour.

That is a significant chunk of money for a young person who is struggling to get by, Mr. Speaker. That is a slap in the face. I think of the kids in the hall bistro over at city hall, again, a business that employs young people who have been struggling. It gives them the opportunity to get job experience. It gives them the opportunity to get on their feet. That has changed lives. Now those youth are being told that they are worth \$2 less an hour. The support that they should be able to get from that to help their families, to help themselves, to raise themselves out of poverty: that is being taken away from them by this government.

I'm proud of the businesses here in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, who support their workers and are proud to do it. I think of Kunitz Shoes on Jasper Avenue. It's been around since the '80s. They're proud to pay their employees a living wage. Indeed, you know, we were talking earlier about the tax bill. There's a corporation that is contributing to the community who is not asking for a corporate tax break. In fact, they told me that they don't want it. They are proud to support and to give back to the community as part of that. I have many businesses like that here in my constituency, some younger entrepreneurs who are working to find new models of how they operate their business so that they can properly support and pay their employees.

It's not always easy, Mr. Speaker. I'll be honest about that. I've talked with them, and, yeah, they talk about the challenges they face and some of the increases that have happened, whether that's with CPP or other things that have made it a little bit tighter. But they have not been asking me to come into this House and vote a lower minimum wage for any of their employees.

Point of Order Quorum

Mr. Dang: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm a quorum?

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to page 402 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the bells must be rung immediately, as per Standing Order 5(2) as well.

The Acting Speaker: A question of quorum has been raised. In order to confirm quorum, we will ring the bells for one minute.

[Pursuant to Standing Order 5 the division bell was rung at 3:59 a.m. and the Acting Speaker confirmed that a quorum was present]

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good morning, hon. members. It's a pleasure to see you this morning.

4:00 a.m.

I thank the hon. member for the request for confirmation of quorum. As you all know, in Standing Order 5

the presence of at least 20 Members of the Legislative Assembly is necessary to constitute a meeting of the Legislative Assembly for the exercise of its powers, and in counting the number of those present, the Speaker, if present, shall be included.

As we can all see, there are at least 20 members inside the Chamber. As such, there is a quorum that is present.

Debate Continued

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that we can certainly count on all our members. Humour pales at 4 a.m.

As I was saying, the question we have before us is one of balance. Are we striking the appropriate balance in respecting workers' rights, in treating Albertan workers as well as workers in any other

province in Canada, in treating youth who do the same work as an adult in a balanced way when it comes to their wage? We seem to have a marked difference in opinion between one side of the House and the other on this, so that is why I'm bringing forward this amendment. I'll give the original the opportunity to reach you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. If you'll just give me a moment here, hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, we'll have it circulated to the table, and then I'll ask you to proceed.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, I see that you'd like to move the amendment to Bill 2. Now, as the amendment was presented in the name of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview – obviously, it would be inappropriate of me to refer to whether or not that member was present and/or not present – and given the current circumstances that are before us, it would be challenging for you to be able to move the amendment in the name of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. However, if the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, if he was or was not present, wanted to rectify the situation, then it could be moved on behalf of the member, in which case that could happen.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to take a moment to reflect on your words and consider what you've just said. It's something I want to make sure I give careful thought to before I proceed, with rendering a decision on that front. I think that at this point . . .

The Speaker: If I might just confirm, then. What I understand is that you are moving the amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Perfect. Please proceed.

Mr. Shepherd: My apologies for having been less than clear on that point originally. There has been an interesting mixture of bells and rising and standing and many things, which confused the matter for a moment, but I'm glad that we've been able to achieve some clarity on this amendment, which I move on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, which reads . . . [Mr. Shepherd's speaking time expired]

The Speaker: Thank you for your comments.

I'm sure that all members of the Assembly now have a copy of the amendment. I'm sure that somebody will be more than happy to read it into the record although we all have a copy of it.

Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may I say what a pleasure it is to see your bright and shiny face. I'd like to ask the Member for Edmonton-City Centre if he could be so kind as to actually read the amendment into the record for us.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for a very pertinent and reasoned question. I move on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time . . .

How often I have heard that, Mr. Speaker; my first time to utter it.

. . . because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, as I read those words, it is your voice that rings in my head.

It is my pleasure to move this amendment, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, I think we have many questions we need to consider regarding the appropriate balance for this bill. Of course, I recognize that the intent of this bill, as has been noted by members in earlier debate this evening, is to be part of a suite of actions that this government wishes to take that they believe will increase investment in the province of Alberta. They have yet to identify how many jobs, precisely, they feel might have been saved over the last four years if these actions had been in place or an amount of investment that they feel, in any precise dollars, would have stayed within the province of Alberta if we had ensured that things had been tilted a little less towards the workers. Perhaps they'll have the opportunity to illuminate us with some of those estimates and those figures during debate.

4:10 a.m.

For the time being, we have the opportunity to bring this forward and choose to suggest that this bill not be read a second time because, frankly, it is our view that this bill is not going to accomplish what members of the government wish to accomplish but will instead simply pick the pockets of Alberta workers, restore an imbalance between workers and employers, and set us back from where we should be aiming to go in terms of the way we treat our workers and the way we approach the workplace here in the province of Alberta.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, and I look forward to debate on the amendment.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, if you desire, as the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has already spoken under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you at this hour. I'm not sure how much time is left under 29(2)(a), but at the same time I was hoping to speak to the amendment as well. I think it's an important amendment in that this act makes significant changes, almost reverses all the progress that was made in changes to the Employment Standards Code, the Labour Relations Code. It's impacting workers' rights, their job-protected leaves, maternity leaves, compassionate care leaves, the minimum wage, holiday pay, overtime pay, all those things. It has consequences for labour relations for many Albertans, so I think it's important that we look into these issues in more detail.

Also, as noted in the amendment, we are of the view that this bill will not draw any investments or stimulate the economy, so I think that not reading it at . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the minister of multiculturalism and status of women is rising to speak to the amendment.

Mrs. Aheer: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, House. The only thing I wanted to suggest – and I think you're calling it the pick-the-pockets bill – is that this side of the House just put the carbon tax back into the pockets of every single Albertan in Alberta. It is an incredible feeling to be able to give that back to the people of Alberta. I would just like to state that, as they try to say that we're picking pockets, we're actually giving it back and putting those dollars back into their pockets.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) if anyone has questions or comments to the hon. minister.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising in debate.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The year was 1974, February 28, actually. February 28 was the day that I was born in 1974.

An Hon. Member: A leap year.

Member Loyola: Actually, no. You know, I hear this all the time. People are, like: oh, you're so lucky you weren't born on the 29th. But 1974 was not a leap year, so if I would have been born the next day, it simply would have been March 1. Right? It wasn't a leap year. I was off by two years and a day.

The reason why I bring this up is because, of course, I've heard repeatedly in this House from members of the UCP that somehow members on this side of the House don't know what it's like to work hard. You know, I get it. It's rhetoric. I get it. Like, working on a farm, I'm sure, is really tough. It's really tough. I've never had the experience myself. I mean, I've visited a farm, right? I get to see the kind of work that's done, but I've never had to actually work on a farm or a ranch. You know, I've never had the experience of doing that. Now, I'm not saying that all the members in the UCP work on farms and ranches and things like that, but, you know, repeatedly some of the members get up and talk about their experience and how hard they worked in running their own business as if members on this side of the House haven't had that experience either.

So I thought I'd go a little bit through my curriculum vitae just to share with you a little bit about the kind of stuff that I've had the pleasure and honour of doing. Now, those members who were in the 29th Legislature know that my family came to Canada. We came fleeing the violence that was occurring in Chile, that occurred on September 11, 1973, the military coup that happened there. As a result of that military coup, it was instrumental for my family to get out of Chile, and we ended up coming here.

Actually, my father came first. He actually came in March of '74. He would often joke because – and Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that you may appreciate this – actually, when he came to Canada, he really wanted to go to Quebec because my father knew how to speak French, and he was really wanting to go to Quebec. But, of course, when you come fleeing violence and you come on refugee status – of course, my family was a community-sponsored refugee, not a government-sponsored refugee, and there is a difference. There are government-sponsored refugees, there are community-sponsored refugees, family-sponsored refugees. They're all a little bit different in how they're treated and the options that they get when they get here.

My father came sponsored by a community. It was actually a religious community. They were actually a group of farmers that would get together, Christians, and they saw it fit to support my father. I'm very thankful that we had that community here in Alberta, that took it upon themselves to say: "You know what? We want to help one of these families that are fleeing the violence in Chile." Because of that, my father was able to come. He came in March, and my mother, my older brother, and I ended up following soon after.

My dad actually worked it out so that we got here the early morning of July 1, of course, Canada Day. My father worked it out just so, because he wanted us to be here for Canada Day and take in the festivities because he was really proud of the fact that we're now living in Canada. We have certain privileges, rights, and freedoms here as well as duties and responsibilities. He wanted us

to really make sure that Canada started to feel like home for us, at least if it was going to be temporary.

Of course, as I always like to remind people, coming to a country as a refugee is very different than coming as an immigrant because the immigrant packs up everything that they have, either sells it all off or whatever they have to do or they give it away, but their intention is very much to leave the country so that you can start another life somewhere else, whereas the refugee has to leave immediately, as soon as possible, fleeing the danger and the violence that they're experiencing, and it's usually an overnight thing. If you ever have the opportunity to talk to someone that had a refugee experience, no matter from which part of the world, you'll know that it's like that. There were many Chileans that fled Chile, ended up actually going to Argentina – and they were in refugee camps in Argentina before they actually came to Canada – or ended up going to Australia or Sweden or even other places here in Canada. That was very much their experience. They had to flee overnight because their lives were actually in danger. They were in danger of being killed.

4:20 a.m.

The reason why I bring this up is because, of course, the experience is different. I just want to make sure that people in this House know that, that it's not the same.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

The Speaker: Hon. member, I just might add that I appreciate the importance of the information that you're sharing. In no way, shape, or form is my interjection a reflection of the importance of that. Having said that, I would imagine that you're just mere moments away from making this important discussion perhaps a bit more relevant to the topic at hand, which, of course, is the amendment that's before the Assembly.

I might just encourage – and I recognize that we've been here for some extended period of time – members to keep their comments relevant, as we know, to the issue at hand.

Debate Continued

Member Loyola: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, indeed. What I'm doing is simply setting the context for the material that I'm about to go into.

As I was saying, coming as a refugee is very distinct. The reality is that refugees, when they come, for example, don't have all their credentials. They don't have documents demonstrating that they have the knowledge that they have or the experience that they've had and often will end up working jobs where they are not just simply underemployed but severely underemployed.

Luckily, my father managed to wade through all of that chaos and actually ended up working a really great job here in Canada through a chemical plant that some of you may recall. It's no longer open, but it was called Celanese Canada. He ended up becoming a project engineer through Celanese Canada.

The reason why I bring this up is because even though my father had managed to wade through all of that, my mother did not have the same experience. My mother was just one semester shy of finishing her political science degree when the military coup happened and unfortunately could not finish the degree because at the time that the military coup happened, the military regime decided that, well, you either study or you work, but you can't do both. By this time, as you may have guessed, my older brother and I were already born, so my mom was not only doing her political science degree, but she was also working full-time. When the

regime decided to do this, she had to choose. Of course, I think that any mother would choose to provide for her family rather than to continue studying.

The reason why I bring this up is because, of course, my parents then had to make ends meet here in Canada. For 17 years my parents had their day jobs – they worked a 9 to 5, which was more like a 7:30 to 4:30 – and then on top of that they would do janitorial service work. They'd come home from their 9 to 5, which, like I said, was more like a 7:30 to 4:30. They'd come home, they'd prepare food for us – by this time, you know, like, the family had started to grow, so it was my older brother, myself, and I have two younger brothers – and then at 5:30 were right back out the door working on their janitorial service contracts. They would not come home until 11:00, 11:30 at night. Could you imagine working from 7:30 in the morning to 11:30 at night, just to get up the next day and do the same thing over again and again and again and again? So when I hear members from the other side talk about how, "Oh, well, you guys don't know what a good, hard day's work is," it's not true.

When I finally became of age, when I was about 11 years old, I told my parents: "I feel so bad that you have to go out and do this work. Please let me go with you, even if I could just do simple things." I started off by just cleaning washrooms, scrubbing the toilets, and passing the vacuum, just so I could help my parents out so that they could finish those contracts just a little bit earlier and make it home just a little bit earlier. My older brother did the same. We helped our parents out as much as we possibly could.

By the time I was 12 years old I started delivering flyers in my neighbourhood. At 13, believe it or not, I was the Dickie Dee ice cream boy. I used to get up early every day. I had to be at the Dickie Dee storage thing, ice cream warehouse by 7:30 in the morning. I didn't have a bicycle. I remember that it would take me at least half an hour to walk there. So I'd get up early in the morning, I'd walk out to the warehouse, I'd get my cart, bells and all – ding, ding, ding, ding – and I'd go sell ice cream for the entire day.

When I got enough experience doing that, a friend of mine told me: "Well, Rod, you know what? Why don't you go and get a job at McDonald's?" I did that. I worked at the McDonald's on 91st Street and 34th Avenue, just outside of Mill Woods. I remember that when I first started, I got paid \$4.25 an hour. I believe at that time I was making just a bit under because I wasn't 14 yet. I was still 13. For some reason – I can't remember specifically what the scenario was – if you weren't 14 yet, you couldn't get the full minimum wage. I think that's what the case was. They gave me some excuse for why I wasn't making \$4.50 and I was only making \$4.25, right?

Anyway, you can probably imagine where this is going. [laughter] Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. At least I'm making the members laugh. You know, it's all about trying to be as jovial as possible, right?

Of course, the main reason why I'm bringing this up is because of the wage differential for youth in the province.

An Hon. Member: There's the connection.

Member Loyola: There we go. There's the connection. There's the connection.

Why discriminate on the basis of age? I don't know. I really don't know why this government wants to roll back the minimum wage for young people. I remember being that young person, being 13 years old and working at McDonald's next to another person that was making more than me simply because they were one year older than I was. But now let me tell you something. I worked just as hard or maybe even harder than that person because I knew what it was to put . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

4:30 a.m.

Member Irwin: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for his contribution. You made me laugh, and I'm still smiling a little bit, but I do also appreciate your sharing of your family's stories. I think the stories of your family are the stories of many families that I heard from in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood as well, particularly the struggles you talked about, not just in your family's home country but when they settled in Edmonton as well.

I wanted to ask the hon. member to just talk a little bit more about why Bill 2 in particular resonates so much with folks in his constituency and to bring it back to the modern day here a little bit because, again, I heard a lot, as I shared in my maiden speech the other day, about just how impactful this province's \$15-an-hour minimum wage has been for a lot of my constituents, a constituency where there are some of the highest levels of child poverty, a constituency where a lot of folks struggle to find affordable, safe housing. Just having that minimum wage has been life changing.

The rhetoric from some folks around the youth wage is saying that, oh, these are young people just living in their parents' basements and that they're just using that for accessories, that sort of thing. But the reality is that, no – again, I know this from speaking to my constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – there are a lot of folks, especially new Canadians, young folks, who work to support their families. That small difference in minimum wage has a huge impact on their families. I worry about my constituents.

To the hon. member: if you could just elaborate a little more about what you heard from constituents, particularly when it comes to families trying to make ends meet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to respond.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for that question. I think it's very pertinent because it is the reality of many new Canadians that are here, that went through a very similar experience to what my parents went through, that the young members of those families are working jobs and are contributing to the household income, that those dollars that they earn are making sure that with that family budget, they can make it to the end of the month.

For those constituents that are younger, I really don't understand this age discrimination. They work hard. They're contributing to their families. Yet this government wants to reduce the minimum wage for these individuals, that are working hard, contributing to their families, by \$2. I think that it's really important that we re-evaluate, and that's why it's very important for me that we support this amendment.

Now, I understand that members on the other side are probably not going to vote for this amendment – I get it – but I think it's pertinent that I represent those people, especially refugees and new Canadians that have gone through a similar experience to what my family has gone through, where we were contributing to the household income through our work. Many of you have heard me talk or say in this House: the dignity of the human person. Why should an individual be discriminated against based on their age? Where's the dignity in that? I ask the members in this House . . .

Member Irwin: I rise on a point of quorum.

The Speaker: Hon. member, just have a seat. You might wait to be called on before you interrupt the member. You may call a point of order. Just in terms of process, if you just wait a moment, I'll just have a brief look at who was in the House prior to the Government House Leader rising.

There are very close to 20 members in the Chamber this morning. There certainly were, in fact, 20, so I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to proceed.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, why should we discriminate against these individuals that are contributing to the household income and making sure that their families can actually make it to the end of the month? Why are they being discriminated against?

The Speaker: Hon. members, any further debate on the amendment that is before us? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising in debate.

Mr. Dang: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure to see you this fine morning and to be able to debate this amendment with all members of the Assembly and to have the opportunity to do the important work of this Assembly so that we can move forward and have open discussion on how we can improve legislation that comes before this House. I really want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for the amendment here. Pretty clearly, we've seen that Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, really isn't something that supports Albertans. It's really something that doesn't support workers, and by extension we know that it's not something that's going to draw investment or stimulate our economy.

I mean, we can see that what's done with this bill is that it cuts overtime pay for employees, it cuts holiday pay for employees, and it moves forward to roll back protections that were really in line with the rest of Canada, Mr. Speaker. I think that's something that's very concerning. When you want to succeed in business and when you want to move forward and have a strong economy, what you need to have is strong workers that can go out and do the jobs that we need done. I'm very concerned that this bill doesn't accomplish that.

I'm very concerned that this bill will have some very damaging effects for our economy. I mean, we look at some of the things being done here. When we look at the difference between pay at time and a half versus straight time, for some employees that's going to be over \$2,500. I mean, that's money that is being spent back in the local economy, that's being spent in local businesses, and that's money that's going to become dead money. If it becomes dead money, Mr. Speaker, I think that's something that should be concerning to all members of this Assembly because we don't need the money sitting in the pockets of bankers. We need the money being spent in Alberta businesses. We need the money being spent right here in our communities. That's something that I think all members of this Assembly should be happy to stand for, should be happy to fight for, and it's something that all members should be very excited about.

I think it's a change that we're seeing, that the government wants to make a change that really has no match in Canada. There is no other Canadian jurisdiction with similar rules. And they did no consultation. The government moved forward on this quickly, with no consultation, and I think that's something that can be very concerning. If they had stopped and done the work – this is a recurring theme, Mr. Speaker – and if they had stopped and simply done consultation and actually talked to Albertans, maybe they

would see that there could be adverse effects from what happened here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The election is over. Our job here today is to make sure we have the best possible legislation for all Albertans. It's to make sure that we move forward and have legislation that improves the lives of all of our constituents. Very clearly, Bill 2 doesn't do that. It won't draw investment to Alberta. It won't stimulate our economy. In fact, what it will do is that it will pick the pockets of vulnerable workers and the average working Albertan, and that is something that I think is actually shameful. I think it's something that we shouldn't stand for in this House and that we should all be proud to stand against.

We're talking about a bill that does things like having different compensation depending on what your human capital is, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's something that is very shameful. I think that we should consider every single Albertan to be equal. We should consider that every single Albertan deserves the same protections and the same pay for the same work, and I think that's something that Albertans will agree with. It's something where Albertans will say: we definitely believe that if we do the same job as you, then we should be paid the same. I think that's something that is common sense. It's fair, and it's common sense.

4:40 a.m.

It really is something that is not unusual from the government, to be moving forward with no consultation at all, and we heard that from the Premier when he said that he wants to move quickly, because his agenda is so important that he can't consult with Albertans, right? Mr. Speaker, that's something that I think is actually really bad for democracy here in this House. It's bad for our Assembly. It's bad for members, private members especially, of course, because we know that the government front bench can move as many bills as they'd like, but private members are subject to the draw and the lottery system. We know that when the government brings forward bills, we expect them to be well researched, we expect them to be well consulted, and the reality is that that didn't happen in this case.

Perhaps the Premier took a page from what they do often in Ottawa and consulted with the big donors and the big friends over there, Mr. Speaker, but I think, certainly, that that's not what Albertans expect of this government. That's not what Albertans want our government to be doing when we invest in our economy and we try to bring forward workplace protections. I mean, we're talking about workplace protections that the NDP government brought in that made workplaces more family friendly. This government, without any consultation, is trying to move in and just throw out the baby with the bathwater. I think that that's something that we should really spend a lot of time considering, whether there were good things in the legislation that we need to talk about.

Trying to ram through this legislation in the middle of the night is something that I'm concerned we'll see the government do again. I'm concerned that the government will continue to try to use the cover of darkness to try and move legislation through the House. I'm concerned that the government will try to move things, that perhaps have not been consulted on properly and perhaps have not been shared with Albertans properly, using the cover of darkness, Mr. Speaker. That is something that I think all Albertans should be very concerned about. It's something that I think Albertans need to keep an eye on. That's why we as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition will be here making sure we hold this government to account. We hold them to account in making sure bills like this do what they're intended.

Pretty clearly, we can see that they've called it An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. But that isn't true. It won't draw

investment. It won't stimulate the economy. Really, I believe further public input is necessary because when the government wants to go in and pick the pockets of everyday Albertans, working-class Albertans like you and me, Mr. Speaker, when the government wants to go in and remove protections and remove banked overtime pay, I think that's something that Albertans will be concerned about and will want to be consulted about. I think that Albertans will want to have the opportunity to tell their government why this is concerning for them.

When we talk about things like wage differentials and whatnot, Mr. Speaker, these are things that Albertans deserve to have a say on, not just the wealthy donors and friends of the government front-benchers. I think, certainly, that all Albertans deserve to have a say in the legislation, and that's why we're sent here. We're sent here to make sure those protections exist for all Albertans. We're sent here to make sure that it's not just the wealthy donors that get a say in legislation.

I'm concerned that because this legislation was drafted so rapidly and without consultation, we're going to miss a lot of the really important things that we need to talk about. We're going to put Alberta out of step with the majority of provinces when we talk about a lot of these workplace protections. We're going to be behind, basically, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that I think is really concerning to me. I mean, really, there are going to be over 400,000 Alberta workers – indeed, it's actually oil and gas workers that are going to be hit the hardest by these changes. It's going to be workers that depend on their jobs to pay their mortgages.

Really, instead of creating jobs – I know the Premier has spoken at length about how he's obsessed with creating jobs, Mr. Speaker – what he's actually doing is that he's cutting overtime pay for working people, and I think that's something that Albertans should be very concerned about. This is something that Albertans will need to take a look at, and it's something that we need to be able to bring in front of them and actually consult on. I think that this amendment makes a lot of sense when we talk about how there isn't enough public input. When we talk about how this government wants to, through the cover of darkness in the middle of the night or perhaps middle of the morning now, move forward with a bill that has really not seen the light of day, I think that's very concerning. I mean, the value of your work should depend on the effort and skill you put into it.

Really, what the government is doing is trying to set different standards for different people, and I really don't think that the segregation of labour is the way to go about this. Actually, what we should be doing is encouraging people to work their hardest no matter what their demographic is, and I think that's something that's very important. I think that when we talk about some of the changes that are really concerning, of course, youth minimum wage differentials are very concerning, several differentials are very concerning because these people are doing the same work as anybody else.

Certainly, I think that if you're doing the same work, then you should be paid the same. Perhaps members opposite think that a government backbencher should be paid differently than an opposition member, whatever it is. That's their prerogative. But I think that, certainly, Albertans expect that for the same work, you get the same pay. I mean, at the end of the day everybody has to put the same number of hours in, the same amount of effort in, and if they're capable of doing the job, Mr. Speaker, they have to do the job. I think that, pretty clearly, when you look at that, it actually is unfair to segregate workers based on demographics. It actually becomes something that I think Albertans will be very concerned about. I think it's something that the Premier will have to answer. Why does he think certain Albertans are worth less? What is it about

their modest human capital that makes them worth less? What is it about people that they deserve over 13 per cent less pay? Thirteen per cent is not an insignificant amount. I mean, if we took 13 per cent out of the provincial budget, I can assure you that would be something quite concerning to all members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at how drastic these changes are and without any consultation, I think that all members should be significantly concerned. I mean, it's something that we really need to look at and see how shocking some of these changes are. In fact, an economist with the national branch of CUPE called the UCP proposal shocking and said that it hurts tradespeople. Another political scientist from Saskatchewan said that the move would give employers a way to defer a wage cost. I think those are all very concerning things. I think those are all things that Albertans don't want to see. But, of course, we won't know that because the government chose to not consult. The government chose to ram this legislation through hastily without consultation. Really, this amendment speaks to how more public input is necessary. We really do need to go and have more discussions about this because this pick-your-pockets bill takes overtime, steals holiday pay, and it gives a big tax gift to corporations. That's something I'm very concerned about. That's something I think members should be very concerned about. I think that members should take a hard look and say: will working people in our ridings benefit from this?

Really, I think, pretty clearly, working people are going to lose out. I mean, some workers, like I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, are going to lose over \$2,500, and that's a huge difference. If in a month your income is reduced by \$2,500, for a lot of people that is more than their mortgage payment, perhaps more than their mortgage and child care payment. That is something that I think is very concerning. That is something that I think this government has not thought through. It's something that I think the government needs to spend more time on consulting with the public, and, really, if the government is willing to do that, we'd be happy to move forward and discuss ways to make the legislation better.

Mr. Speaker, we only have one chance to make this right. This legislation will affect the lives of over 400,000 Albertans, 400,000 workers predominantly in oil and gas, and it's something that I'm very concerned about because all workers deserve to have the same protections as they would in any other province, as they would in any other part of Canada. That is something that I think is very important, that Albertans will look at and say: is this what they wanted with a Conservative government? Did they expect a Conservative government to go into their pockets and take their hard-earned money away? That is something that I'm very concerned about, I think that my constituents and many Albertans are concerned about.

I know that the members of the opposition over here, we would love to see that the government would try to consult and perhaps try to engage with average Albertans and with their constituents, but instead we can see that, just like during the campaign, government members decided to flee the public spotlight. They didn't go to any forums, Mr. Speaker. They tried to avoid talking to anybody about their platform. In fact, they wouldn't return phone calls. We tried to reach the Conservative candidate that I ran against on election day. We called the front line at his office, and it was actually disconnected. There was no phone for me to call at all.

4:50 a.m.

That was actually something that I think is indicative of what the government has done today and why the amendment is so necessary. It's that we do need further public input. You cannot run away from the spotlight when you are trying to govern effectively, Mr. Speaker. Governance is about engaging with all Albertans, engaging with all

the people that we were sent here to represent, and ensuring that we have legislation that works for all Albertans. We don't see that here in Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill. We don't see that the government has done a good job. We don't see that they've actually given consideration to how it's going to hurt the economy, how pulling \$2,500 out of workers' pockets is going to hurt the economy, how those workers are no longer going to be able to spend the money in their local economies and in small businesses around their homes. That is something that is very concerning. I mean, when you take money out of the pockets of Albertans and you take it away from their families – sending a worker to the food bank is not how you incite more economic activity.

I really urge all members to vote for this amendment. I think it's very important.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Infrastructure is rising with a brief question or comment.

Mr. Panda: Very brief, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. Welcome back.

I really commend the Member for Edmonton-South for bringing in that energy, but if that energy is actually channelled in a positive manner, that would be helpful for the people that elected him in Edmonton-South. I followed him carefully when he talked about Bill 3 a few hours ago, probably three, four hours ago, and now about Bill 2. When he talked about Bill 3, he used the words “risky ideology” probably 30 times. Now when he talked about Bill 2, he talked about consultation, and I want to focus on that, Mr. Speaker. He also mentioned that the election is over, which is good. We are not campaigning anymore. We've finished that. But when the member is talking about consultation, for some of the incumbent members like you and me, just going back into the timeline . . .

Mr. Dang: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: A point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Point of Order

Question-and-comment Period

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a):

Subject to clause (b), following each speech on the items in debate referred to in suborder (1), a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments.

Very clearly, he's referring to my comments that I made during Bill 3. He said so himself. I believe that we're currently debating Bill 2, and the member should hold his comments to that.

The Speaker: Thank you for the interjection. I will acknowledge that he referenced your comments that you'd made with respect to Bill 3. He also is currently in the middle of talking about your comments with respect to Bill 2. He's only made brief comments, and I think that he's well within his right to do so.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Debate Continued

Mr. Panda: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to set the record straight here. When the member is talking about risky ideology and he's talking about picking pockets,

there's nothing further from the truth than these members opposite characterizing as picking pockets. So if putting more money into the pockets of Albertans is “risky ideology,” so be it, Mr. Speaker.

When they talk about consultations, this Bill 2 was on our campaign platform. It was our campaign commitment, and we told Albertans that that's what we'll do, unlike what the NDP did when they were in government. Remember when they brought in Bill 6, the so-called consultation – that should remind them. In our case we actually put it on our campaign platform. We said that that's what we will do. It's a promise made to Albertans, and we are trying to keep our promise, to pass this bill on time. When they talk about equality – the equality we're trying to do here is prosperity for all. It's equality in prosperity, not an equality in misery. That's what they want.

This amendment is moved by an Opposition House Leader who actually is saying that this won't draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy. That is not true, Mr. Speaker. The same member actually yesterday attacked the job creators. Yesterday he attacked the job creators, and he apologized. Now he is moving this amendment, which is actually mischaracterizing. Then these members opposite kept talking about picking pockets. The Member for Chestermere-Strathmore tried to correct that, but they keep repeating this, so they are doing a disservice to Albertans and the people that elected them.

Also, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Calgary-Varsity is an expert on these matters. He has consulted enough, and we are debating here. There are certain aspects of this bill that we actually are going to bring back to the Legislature in the fall after more consultations. We only included here the ones that we had enough consultations on, but there are other aspects of this bill which belong to Bill 2. We're going to bring them to this House after further consultations in the fall.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to support this amendment because the person who moved this amendment, the Opposition House Leader, has no credibility on this.

The Speaker: Thank you to the Minister of Infrastructure.

Over a long period of time the questions and comments in the application of 29(2)(a) have taken a very broad approach. I know that members of the opposition also enjoy the same luxury with respect to how broad the rulings have been on the use of Standing Order 29(2)(a).

With that said, anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Merci, M. le Président. Bonjour, et j'espère que vous avez bien dormi un petit peu ce matin. Juste avant le lever du soleil, à cinq heures huit, je suis très heureux de participer dans ce débat au sujet de l'amendement du projet de loi no 2, un projet de loi que je préfère appeler la saison verte contre les travailleurs Albertains et Albertaines.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

For those who don't speak even the poor French that I try to, I of course welcomed Mr. Speaker to the morning as the sun rises at 5:08 officially, so it's just before sunrise. I hoped that he had a little bit of sleep, and I was very happy to rise and speak to this debate on the subject of the amendment to Bill 2, a bill that I prefer to call open season against workers in Alberta.

I also wanted to make a point that in this House we are able to speak in French at any time. We are not in any way required to provide a translation or an advance script of what we may wish to speak about in French. That example has been made numerous times by other members in this House, including the current

Premier. So I think it's incumbent upon this House, as they do in *Hansard*, to continue translating after the fact and providing our constitutional rights to speak in French in this Legislature with the substance they deserve.

5:00 a.m.

With that said and speaking to the amendment at hand, I think it's very important that we support this amendment because, in fact, as it says very clearly, the bill will not actually draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and further public input is necessary. Though I think we've shown ample evidence in our remarks although members of the government have suggested to the contrary – I think these efforts have been made time and time again to show that the measures of this bill will certainly not in any way, shape, or form draw investment to Alberta and, in fact, might do the opposite.

I think that any amendment or any bill that demonstrably doesn't accomplish what it purports to accomplish should receive a second dose of sober second thought, and that's what we're asking that the House choose to do by supporting the amendment to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, when it really, in fact, is an act that declares an open season on Alberta workers, or, as we otherwise call it, the pick-your-pockets act.

I know I've spoken to many young people who are very, very dissatisfied with the fact that they're going to be suffering the cut in the minimum wage simply because of their age. I have mentioned in this House already my experience with a similar type of a situation, where I was working at a job, in fact, as a DATS bus driver, under contract. The contractor paid us a wage that had been negotiated, and then the contractor changed from one to another. The new contractor felt no obligation to continue paying that wage, and overnight all the workers, all those bus drivers, had a \$4-an-hour pay cut, from about \$13 to nine bucks an hour.

So I know exactly what our young people in this province are feeling right now. They're feeling very bitter. They're feeling demoralized. They're feeling pretty angry, and they're feeling that the government is really treating them unfairly, and I think that will be reflected in the way they tend to vote when they become eligible to vote.

Also, they are also not alone in this. They have parents. They've got younger siblings and co-workers and friends. On the face of it and when you can hear business owners talk about their efforts to rationalize this cut in pay, saying that it will be, you know, an economic impact that will allow them to hire other workers, it rings pretty hollow on the individual workers who are suffering this loss as well as people who know them, the people who are close to them. It's inherent injustice is pretty blatant, and it's not lost on Albertans what this government is willing to do in the name of saving businesses what they believe is money that they would invest in other workers.

In my view, it's pretty pathetic to hear government members and even some of their validators of this bill and this measure say: "You know, it's good for you. Cutting your wages is good for you. It'll be better." It's more than paternalistic. I'm really shocked that that type of an argument could be made. I certainly didn't feel that way when I had my wages cut by four bucks an hour overnight. I felt terribly exploited, and I really have never forgotten it. I know that I took what actions I could take back then by calling in a reporter and having that reporter write a story. That story hit the newspaper, and the next morning, of course, I was hauled on the carpet in the office of the manager with that article on the desk of that manager and red circles all around the quotes that I made because – and this is a direct quote – I called it a screw job. That was quoted in the paper,

and they didn't like it all that much. That's exactly the way I felt, though.

The next morning they concocted a plan and hired a stooge to go ahead and follow me. They did. They followed me all day long. I knew right off the bat, right out of the garage that somebody was following me to concoct a story about whether I'd, you know, put my signal light on or put the brake lights on or come to a full stop. After the shift they concocted a story about how I'd had infractions of driving rules, and they fired me, just like that. Boom. That's what Alberta labour laws have been like, and that's the type of thing I've experienced in my work experience. It was over somebody unjustifiably, in my view, cutting my wages by four bucks an hour, by 25 per cent, overnight.

We're doing the same thing to our young students, our working students, and it's a wholly heartless approach to labour law, just totally disrespectful of the human beings that we have working in our workforce, who are entering our workforce. The message that that sends to people who are working now and have been working at \$15 an hour and are chopped to \$13 is that they have no value, they're not worth while, and they're dispensable. That's how they actually feel.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I felt like that, and you can get a sense of the bitterness I still have and that I hold for the manager and the company that took that action and saw fit to go ahead and just simply cut my wage because they could, because the labour laws allowed them to get away with it. That was, like, 30 years ago, and here we're looking at a government and government members who are arguing that this is what we should go back to and that this is acceptable in 2019 in Alberta, labour legislation that allows a total disrespect of the human beings that are in the workforce by cutting their wages overnight simply to satisfy what they think is a way to stimulate further employment but in a way that's been totally discredited.

What they're doing is damaging young people as they enter the workforce and damaging their view of the whole economic system the government hopes they'll actually embrace. It doesn't make any sense at all to adopt a system that really diminishes the value that people have in themselves. It tells the world that we don't value our young people, yet this government seems intent on rationalizing it away so that businesses will support them, so that business owners will support them. There are business owners who don't support this, who have come clean and said: look, we're going to continue paying the current \$15 an hour because we feel ashamed to follow along with this purported government change to reduce the minimum wage.

That's one of the elements of this legislation that I think will not help draw investment back to Alberta or allow or encourage companies to reinvest these so-called savings into Alberta or stimulate the economy because it does more damage to the working force, that they're supposedly helping out by creating more jobs, because it demoralizes working people at a young age. It also, if you do the math, takes about \$4,000 a year out of their pockets. That's \$4,000 for somebody who's 16 to 18 years of age, and these people are either saving for university or perhaps they're helping their family out.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that I left home after high school, when I was 17 years of age. Believe me, I worked just as hard as anybody else when I was working jobs at 17 years of age out of high school, and I was not happy to suffer another indignity that this government still wants to continue in Alberta, and that's paying a wage differential to younger people. I suffered being paid a lower wage because of my age, as I mentioned before, at the old Marshall Wells warehouse here in Edmonton, that stood on the land that the bus depot used to stand on, and now it's actually part of the Ice District

redevelopment. When I was hired there – I think it was somewhere around \$2 and a quarter an hour when I was 16 – the people who were 18 were making a differential that brought them somewhere closer to \$2.75, \$2.65, something like that. I was working shoulder to shoulder with those same workers.

5:10 a.m.

It was not something that I thought anybody should be proud of. I didn't understand it. I mean, that was the way it was. You couldn't do anything about it because that was the law in Alberta, and this is the law that this government wants to turn back to, to turn back the clock. It's something that is a theme of this whole government.

Of course, we know that is something that the current Premier is wont to do because of the article that I've actually tabled once already in this House, where in an *Edmonton Sun* Sunday edition people are asked 20 questions and interviewed about various things, including their likes in the cinema or what they might have for breakfast on a Sunday. One of the questions, of course, asked of our current Premier when he was interviewed for such a Sunday showcase article was: if you could have your own superpower, your favourite superpower, what in the world would your superpower choice be? Our current Premier said that he would choose "to be able to go back in time." Well, let me say, Mr. Speaker, that he's got his wish. He's moving backwards in time, and he's trying to take the rest of us with him.

I for one am going to resist it every step of the way. This is not what Albertans are looking to do. We're a very forward-looking province. We've got a vision for this province that goes well beyond 1955. In fact, I'd like to say that the 21st century is on the minds of most people who are of working age in this province. We intend to make this government know that the vision extends well beyond labour legislation and looks towards the future with eagerness and excitement and knowledge that we have a capacity in this province to know that beyond our borders are markets that are yet to be sought and yet to be grown, that we have the ingenuity in this province and the brainpower to grow our young minds so that those opportunities can be found and developed and not to accept, as we've been told during the time frame that I grew up and went to university in, that we have limitations on ourselves because we were a landlocked province and we couldn't get another pipeline to tidewater, that we didn't have the intelligentsia to determine the technology that would get the new products developed or value-added products in this province processed.

Whether it be in agriculture or whether it be in industry of other kinds, we have visions on this side of the House that the government lacks.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, Member.

Anyone want to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung's comments. In particular, I appreciated – j'apprécie que tu parles français aussi – what you spoke about in regard to the youth wages. I think the Member for Edmonton-South said this very well as well, just the fact that we know, you know, on our side of the House anyways, that all Albertans, young or old, deserve equal pay for equal work.

[The Speaker in the chair]

One of the things I'm quite concerned about as a former teacher myself is the fact that with this wage differential vulnerable teenagers could most definitely be encouraged to drop out to earn a higher wage. That's quite concerning. We still have one of the

highest drop-out rates, actually, across Canada, and it's not a rate that has decreased at all in the last number of years. We've made a little bit of progress under your leadership, Member for Edmonton-North West, for sure, but I worry greatly that steps like this are going to roll back any progress that we've made.

So I would ask the hon. member to just speak a little bit more about perhaps his own experience and even that of what he's heard from his constituents around concerns about a differential and the fact that, again, we stand so much for the value that a worker is a worker is a worker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the call.

Mr. Dach: Merci encore, M. le Président. Je peux continuer en anglais, mais je suis très heureux de pratiquer mon français et d'avoir l'occasion de temps en temps participer dans le discours dans cette Chambre en français. J'espère que les autres dans la Chambre qui parlent pas le français et même qui voudrait essayer ou pratiquer leur français, qui ont appris dans une école secondaire ou peut être dans un cours d'immersion français – je vous invite de participer avec moi, en parlant français dans cette Chambre. C'est quelque chose que j'aime très bien. Je sais bien que mon grandpère, M. Joseph Edouard Napoleon LaBelle, qui est mort depuis quelques ans maintenant, serait très, très heureux d'entendre nous parlons en français dans cette Chambre. A great pleasure to speak French in this Chamber, and my late grandfather, M. LaBelle, would be very proud to know that we are able to do that in this Legislature.

With respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's question, though, the dropout rate – and this is something I'm going to have to learn to say in French; I couldn't look it up quick enough – is something that does simply concern everyone, I think, with justification, because a wage cut may cause somebody to decide that they're going to just drop out of school or claim or lie, saying that they are not a student. I think the depth of that problem has really not been fully analyzed yet. Certainly, the risk of it is there, and it's something that we should be aware of and really consider strongly when we're thinking about what the consequences of this minimum wage cut might be in terms of how many people might decide that they just won't continue their education.

And what's the cost of that? If an individual decides to not pursue their education, somehow is out of school for two or three years, and the next thing you know, they're 22, 23 years of age and they don't have a high school diploma. Their employment opportunities are diminished; their earning power is diminished. It changes their life and that of their families, that they may have already started. It's simply a direct result of a process that this government will have started, and it's unfortunate that this government hasn't really thought that through.

I'm happy to see that members opposite are, bright and early, counting numbers, and we're happy to have that happen.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there others wishing to speak to RA1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure – it's my very first time – to rise and speak in favour of this amendment as it clearly lays out that this bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary. I think this is a very reasonable amendment, and this should be accepted.

Looking at this bill, you know, and listening to the members in this House, there's no way this bill actually shows that this is going

to do any good with our economy. All it seems is that this is another attempt to fund the largest corporations on the backs of the most vulnerable people, the young people of this province. We should have actually encouraged them to get out, to find jobs, and shown them how valuable they are to us and to this society, instead of this. I see this as another part of the systematic attacks on the backs of the ordinary workers. In this case it's on the workers under the age of 18, the most vulnerable people, that did not even vote for this government. They did not even have their input, and they will pay for this decision if this bill gets passed. Mr. Speaker, to me it seems like this is, basically, even a violation of fundamental rights, human rights. It's discrimination based on somebody's age.

5:20 a.m.

I just wanted to go back and share a story with the House. In 2015, when we were going into the provincial election, I was part of the team that was able to arrange a small discussion forum for all the candidates running in south Edmonton. I hope that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie would remember this incident. There was a question raised during the forum of why you wanted to run and why you think the people should vote for you. One of the candidates from the forum said something about one of the hon. members, our former Speaker and the MLA from my riding, my predecessor the late Gene Zwozdesky. The member said: "You know, I think the member has had the privilege to represent this riding for 22 years. He's over the age of 60 now, and he should not run." You know what happened? Mr. Zwozdesky reacted immediately. What happened after that intimidation: that member was not even able to participate, after that kind of remark, in that whole forum.

And guess what? What are we going to do here? Those innocent young people who are under the age of 18 will do the same amount of work, will have the same skills, will get up the same as us, maybe earlier, 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock, and will go work in gas stations or McDonald's, but they are not entitled to get the same wage because of their age. Those people: we should be encouraging them. When they step up and try to be independent and try to support their families, try to fill their needs – they might need to buy a computer; they might to save some money for their education – they keep this economy moving by participating in this economy. They are the ones that make a little money, and they go to the restaurants, they go to the stores, and they invest their money right there. They help the economy keep moving.

I don't know what benefit this government really sees by rolling back their wages. It's making it so difficult even for the employers. I know what would happen if the young worker is just about to turn 18. He will not find a job because the employer will think twice: given time, after a month or two, he will be entitled that we pay him \$15 an hour, so let's not hire him. What would happen if somebody turns 18 just a month before Christmas? What would you do? Let him go? Find another worker?

It's not really helping anyone that I see, not only this bill but the other bills. My friends on the other side, the opposite side of the House, are so confused, and I think that by passing this amendment, it will give them some opportunity to dig deep into this, you know, really look at it and think twice. Maybe that will help them somehow modify the bill. I've seen that in a past bill when it was something to do with giving away a tax cut to the largest corporations. The members on the other side kept referencing the small businesses when, in fact, that bill had nothing to do with the small businesses; it was to fund the largest corporations in the province.

A \$15 minimum wage. I just want to repeat that this is a minimum wage, not even a livable wage, that we want to attack. I remember that my colleague, a single parent, you know, earning about \$20,

was not even able to afford the ordinary living standard we have, the minimum living standard, given the rents, increasing rent – she has to pay about \$1,500 – and the daycare expense and the groceries. The \$20 will bring probably close to \$2,500 home, but it's not really enough for her. And here we're trying to attack a minimum \$15 wage, and we are dividing people to attack based on their age.

I think we should actually consider this amendment. I strongly encourage my friends in this House to vote for the amendment. That will really help them actually give us more time and help us address the real issue, the real challenge we are facing ahead in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration was the first to rise.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address some of the comments made by the hon. member on the other side. I guess the first comment is in regard to the amendment. I'd like to point out that the hon. member spoke a great deal – and I want to address some of his comments – about the youth job-creation wage. In fact, that does not form part of Bill 2, so actually using that as an argument to support the amendment that we need more time to discuss this – I don't understand the logic behind it because, in fact, we wouldn't be discussing it as part of that.

That said, I would like to address and clarify the purpose because the hon. member mentioned that, you know: why are you doing this? Really, the purpose of the youth job-creation wage is just that, to create employment for youth. The previous government, in their rush to move to a minimum wage of \$15, almost a 50 per cent increase, in the face of one of the worst economic downturns in the province, left a lot of people behind. By moving the wages up by that amount, thousands of people, thousands of Albertans lost their jobs, and those who were hit the hardest were the youth, the young people in Alberta.

What we are trying to do with this act and what we will do with this act is get our young people back to work. By instituting a youth job-creation wage at \$13 an hour, we will provide incentives for employers to actually train young people and get them on the job ladder. It's really important, Mr. Speaker, to point this out. The sooner you get on the job ladder, the more experience that you can get, and once you get more experience, then you can actually increase your wages and go from job to job.

Mr. Speaker, this minimum is exactly that, a minimum. Certain employers will actually decide to pay higher than that, particularly once someone actually gets on that job ladder and gets some experience. There will be employers out there – you know, some concern was raised by the hon. member, saying that there may be a reduction in their pay for people who are currently working, right? But this is a minimum, just that, a minimum.

5:30 a.m.

Employers, once they have trained someone and invested time, energy, and effort in that, they want to hold on to these people. To say that this is automatically going to result in a job cut: quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is not true, not true at all. In fact, the Calgary Stampede: we confirmed with them that they had hired a number of students working the summer at \$15 an hour, and they confirmed they're going to continue to pay them at \$15 an hour. It's a choice. It's a minimum, right? The important thing is the thousands of youth that we have right now who are not making any money, who can't save for school, who can't save for their

new car or a trip to Europe or to help out with their family, because what do they earn? They earn nothing right now. By actually establishing a minimum wage at \$13 an hour, it provides them an opportunity to get into the workforce, get experience, earn some money, and then get on that job ladder so they can actually increase their wages.

Now, turning to the amendment, the amendment reads that the Alberta open for business act not be read a second time “because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy.” That, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is not true. This bill is designed in its totality to actually, you know, reduce burdens on employers through the general holiday changes that we’re actually suggesting, which particularly hit the restaurant industry extremely hard, and to reduce losses of hours and jobs for Albertans, so to get them back to work and also to restore balance.

So I urge all members of the Chamber to not vote for this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows, if you would like?

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is still available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s always my pleasure to rise under 29(2)(a) and speak to some of the comments that were made here. I mean, I’m really concerned with some of the comments the minister made here. Of course, the Member for Edmonton-Meadows really spoke to some of the importance of why the opposition is trying to move this amendment. I’m concerned when the minister speaks about how the youth wage is supposed to help youth, but really clearly we’ve seen youth across this entire province speaking out. In fact, if you look on social media – I hope you’ll rule that this is a phrase that could be in order, Mr. Speaker – the minister has been ratioed twice yesterday alone.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are on the amendment. I see the Member for Calgary-McCall rising to debate.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this amendment that this bill not be read a second time because we’re of the view that it “will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.” I guess I can start by saying that the government got the mandate. They may have mentioned some of these things in passing in their campaign, but in no way, shape, or manner was it a comprehensive consultation on the detailed amendments that are brought forward in this legislation.

I will briefly talk about the context that when we became government in 2015, I think there was a consensus around Albertans, labour folks that the Employment Standards Code, the Labour Relations Code, these pieces of legislation, had not been reviewed for decades and that essentially Albertans didn’t have the same rights that Canadians in other provinces were enjoying, hence the changes that were made to holiday pay, to compassionate care, those breaks and many other changes that were made essentially to give Albertans the same rights that in other provinces Canadians were enjoying.

Also, there was a promise made that we would increase the wage to \$15, and hence we increased the minimum wage, but we heard from the minister in particular that they are cutting \$2 from youth wages to create employment. Again, being a student of economics, I fail to see the logic that we will cut someone’s wage and somehow business will hire some more people. I think businesses will hire

people only when they need it, and when they need it, they will hire them whatever that minimum wage is.

The U.S. brought in a minimum wage for the first time in 1938, and up until 2014-15 they raised the minimum wage 21 times. There are longitudinal studies about that increase in the minimum wage. Every time the argument that we heard from the other side was the same, that it will kill the economy, that it will kill businesses, that it’s not the right time, and all those arguments. However, the evidence is that the increase in the minimum wage didn’t result in unemployment, and in most cases employment grew, their GDP grew, and economic activity grew.

Essentially, if you want to create youth job opportunities, I think one example will be that in 2015 they discontinued the program called STEP, student temporary employment program. We invested back into that program, restored that program, added somewhere around \$10 million to that program, essentially working with the employers to make sure that they are hiring youth on a priority basis and getting them the experience they need. That’s how you create opportunities. That’s how you create youth employment. I don’t think that cutting their wages magically creates employment by, I guess, any stretch.

Here I think they are saying that, again, they are helping businesses, but at the same time they are taking away the rights from Albertans that they fought for. There is a long history of how they got those rights in the first place. Secondly, they are attacking those rights that Canadians enjoy in other provinces.

If we talk about, for instance, overtime pay, there is a huge history of how we came to the eight-hour workday and how overtime was agreed to when you work more than eight hours of the day. Overtime means that you are working after those eight hours of the day, and before you were able to bank that at time and a half. Now they will not have that protection if that bill was to pass.

5:40 a.m.

The same thing with, like, their holiday pay: that’s getting cut. When we say that it’s pick-your-pocket legislation, then they say that, no, somehow that’s not appropriate. But if we look at the Albertans who earn overtime, I think, those who are working in the oil and gas industry, they may have shifts where they’re working in a certain period, like, on projects that are three weeks straight or sometimes more than that, and the legislation that was in place was giving them the opportunity to then bank that overtime at time and a half. There were workers in the construction industry who were able to do that. There were workers in skilled trades.

Essentially, all those workers will not have these protections because of this piece of legislation. That’s why it is important that we not now read this bill for the second time but take some time to get public input, look into these matters in a fulsome manner. It’s just the First Session and, I guess, the ninth day. Why rush it so much? We still have time, and we should take the time that’s needed and necessary to get these things right. I don’t think that mentioning it once or twice in a campaign amounts to fulsome consultation on such important protections, on such important rights that have consequences for the livelihoods of thousands and thousands of Albertans. In some cases, like, it’s \$2,000 to \$3,000 per 12 weeks, or two, three months. That’s a huge difference, especially for working people.

Similarly, I think I talked about youth jobs and those differentials. I think it’s a matter of fairness as well that people who do similar work, the same kind of work, be treated in the same manner and fairly and just, I guess. Having an arbitrary age limit put in there just to discriminate, just to find an excuse to pay somebody less: I think that’s not fair. If somebody is doing similar

work and putting in time, putting in effort, they should be paid the same.

There are many other things. Like, if we talk about our minimum wage, even though there was an expressed campaign promise that would raise it to \$15, we worked with industry, we worked with businesses, and we agreed that we will bring in that minimum wage in a phased manner. Then we brought it in in four different instalments and gave businesses opportunities to adjust. Similarly, I think that in this case, since these are sweeping changes, there is value to getting input from the public. That's why, again, this amendment is very important.

Then I talked a little bit about general holiday pay and that distinction, how that has been changed and how the eligibility has changed. I think those changes do put Alberta out of step with other provinces such as British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. The rest of Canada is doing something differently, and now this piece of legislation will put Alberta out of step. Again, that also necessitates that Albertans should have similar rights and that this government take the time necessary to consult with the public, consult with those who will be impacted by this legislation, consult with those whose livelihood will be impacted by this legislation.

With respect to banked overtime changes I think no other Canadian jurisdiction, as far as I can tell, has similar rules. Again, there were no consultations that were undertaken, and these changes are rushed through. This amendment creates that opportunity for the government to take the time that is needed and to consult with those who will be directly impacted by these changes.

At the same time, I think we also heard, as the name An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business at least tries to suggest, that somehow these changes will help businesses, that these changes will help stimulate the economy. I think that attacking workers, their rights, in no way, shape, or manner will ever help the economy or will ever help draw investment or stimulate the economy. I think there is evidence, actually, to the contrary. If you pay your workers well, you will see that you have a better retention rate. You will have better productivity. By attacking workers' wages, I think you're doing exactly the opposite of what you're trying to do if you're making it open for business, encouraging businesses to hire more, stimulating the economy, or attracting investments. These kinds of changes will not attract investment if workers are attacked like that. That's not helping the government achieve that as well.

These changes, coupled with other changes such as those huge tax breaks like the \$4.5 billion in tax breaks, coupled with this bill and that kind of attack on workers' rights I think will not help us in any way, shape, or manner. Rather, on one hand, their rights are getting impacted, and on the other hand we do know that in the absence of new revenue sources, if other bills are passed, they will have an impact on their services, too.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is rising with a brief question or comment.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for his comments. I particularly appreciated his comments in regard to fairness. This fairness, or perhaps lack thereof, seems to be a theme. We were talking about fairness earlier today when we were discussing the \$4.5 billion tax giveaway. This is a government that is choosing to give the wealthiest Albertans, corporations a large tax giveaway yet arguing about a fair wage for young people and denying them the opportunity to earn a fair wage. [interjection] Exactly.

I just wanted the member to maybe speak a little bit more about fairness in the context of this bill and this amendment in particular and to just perhaps share as well – I know we talked a little bit earlier about some of the individual stories; the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie talked about that a little bit as well, just the individual impact, and I know the member has a pretty, you know, important story of his own – about just what an impact a fair wage would have on your family as well.

Thank you.

5:50 a.m.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I think that when we talk about the minimum wage in the context of fairness, we do know that there are almost 350,000 to 400,000 Albertans who get impacted by the minimum wage.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

If we further break that down, we do know that two-thirds of that number are women, oftentimes with responsibilities for family, child-bearing, child-rearing. I think the saying goes that the criteria for a just society is that you look at how they treat their most vulnerable. These students, those people who are working on minimum wage, struggling day in and day out to meet their basic needs, to put food on the table, to provide for shelter: they are struggling. For a government to pick winners and losers: that's not the government's job. The government's job is to treat everyone fairly, to be the government for everyone, and in making decisions, I think they have to balance competing interests.

Certainly, we want to see a thriving economy. We want our businesses to thrive. We want our businesses to create jobs, create opportunities, but at the same time we need to be mindful of what impact these changes will have on our society, what impact these changes will have on our youth, what impact these changes will have on women, who make up two-thirds of those who are earning the minimum wage. Those things also need to be considered.

In the way this legislation is drafted, I think it takes a lot away from workers in Alberta. It takes a lot away, and at the same time we do not see and we are of the view that it doesn't get the intended results of drawing investments or stimulating the economy. Rather, it's just picking winners and losers, and I think that in this case those who are working Albertans, those who are on the minimum wage, those who are young are at the losing end of the spectrum. I don't think that's fair in a modern society like ours. I think we can certainly do better, and there are many other ways that we can attract investment. There are many other ways that we can stimulate the economy. For instance, when we were in government, to attract investment, we came up with tax credits.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. How nice to see you in that chair. You look great there.

Good morning again, everyone. To those of you who may have been – I'm not speaking to the hon. members; I'm speaking to those maybe watching online the riveting discussions that we're having in this Legislative Assembly. I'm sure there were many of them who went to bed last night watching this feed online, and now they've probably woken up and, of course, turned it on again, and they're probably wondering: what is wrong with those members in that Assembly that they're still wearing the same outfits they were wearing last night? It's not a walk of shame; it's just that we are

here working hard, all of us, for Albertans. So just a shout-out about our outfits, that have lasted quite some time.

I am pleased to rise today and speak to this amendment to Bill 2, named, of course, by the members on the opposite side as the open for business act, but as you may know, we have another name for it over on this side, and that would be the pick-your-pockets bill. You know, I spoke earlier this evening, morning – I’ve lost track of what it is – on the issue of how we have a lot more in common than we have different amongst our parties.

One of the things, I think, that leads to this perception that, you know, one party believes in one thing and one believes in another is that we hear a lot of the members opposite speaking a lot about jobs. Of course – I made the point earlier – we care about jobs over here on this side as well. One of the reasons why it’s sometimes hard to believe that the members opposite are committed to something beyond jobs is that they don’t seem to actually care so much about the people who are performing those jobs. They talk a lot about jobs and don’t seem to give as much or even decent consideration to the people who are actually performing that work.

I spoke earlier about how, you know, we care about private-sector jobs – and those have certainly been hurt in the last few years with the downturn in the oil prices – but we don’t talk about public-sector jobs. Those are jobs as well. The members opposite talk a lot about wanting to increase jobs – and we agree with that – but those jobs come with people attached to them. Those people are Albertans who are performing the work. I’m confused sometimes as to why there is so much interest in the job but not in the person behind it. That’s why it feels like there is an intent on the other side to perhaps only focus on who, I guess, creates the job, as the term is used over there, and not so much on who performs it. It seems like they’re picking the pockets of Alberta employees.

I watched the NDP government bring in the changes to the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code. I’m an employment and labour lawyer. That’s my practice. I did that for some time. What I knew was that the existing Employment Standards Code, prior to the NDP government, was incredibly outdated. I studied law in Ontario. I have a lot of friends that I went to law school with who still practise in Ontario. We would sometimes talk about questions and issues that came up, and they were constantly shocked about how far behind the Employment Standards Code was. We’d be talking about an issue, and they’re, like, “Well, of course, you have to do this because, you know, that’s the law.” I’d be, like: “No, no. That’s the law in Ontario. That’s not the law in Alberta.” We didn’t provide a lot of the same standard benefits that were provided across this country to workers.

It goes without saying that the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code were long overdue for a review and for an overhaul. I think it’s telling that the provisions that were brought forward in Bill 2 – actually, there were a lot of things that were kept in there that were brought in by the NDP government. I think that speaks to the fact that even the members opposite recognize that there was a need to bring our employment and labour standards up to code and up to a standard that at least met the minimums nationally.

What’s interesting, though, is that while they kept a lot of the great things about the changes to the Employment Standards Code such as the leave provisions, compassionate leave, you know, medical leave, providing the ability for workers to take unpaid leave when difficult circumstances struck them – they protected those – the things that they have decided that they want to roll back seem to be very targeted. These were not the issues that were a matter of public consultation.

You know, I’ve also stood up in this House and talked about understanding that there was a mandate that was brought forward, because the UCP laid it out very clearly in their platform. Arguably,

there were a couple of issues that were, for sure, election issues, and we got a clear message from the voters on how they believed in that. As much as the members in my constituency might have felt differently, there were some issues which, I am willing to grant, were election issues. But I don’t agree that rolling back the minimum wage for young workers and that carving out and scaling back and clawing back the overtime from Albertans was part of their mandate. They may have laid it out – we talk a lot about how thick that UCP platform was – but I can tell you that even people that I spoke to at the doors in my riding who told me they were going to be voting for the UCP would mention that they don’t agree with scaling back overtime, that they don’t agree with a lower minimum wage for young workers. So I don’t actually believe that the members on the opposite side can stand up and say that they have a clear mandate to roll back wages for young workers, to claw back overtime pay in particular.

6:00 a.m.

That really strikes me because – I’ve already talked about this – the members on the other side seem to really place a higher benefit on private-sector jobs versus public-sector jobs. I don’t think that’s a secret. I don’t think that’s a surprise. But who is going to get hurt most by clawing back the overtime? A lot of private-sector employees, particularly private-sector employees in oil and gas. You know, we know the statistics. I’m sure my colleagues have already spoken to it numerous times. The average oil and gas worker who might be putting in 10 overtime hours in a week on a 12-week project: that’s 120 hours in paid time off that they would have earned. By clawing it back so that they only get that time at straight time, not at overtime pay, that’s a loss of \$2,500. These are workers, these are jobs that the members on the other side claim to highly value, yet they’re looking to pick the pockets of those employees and those jobs. As I mentioned, I don’t believe that there’s a mandate to do that.

I want to speak specifically on the issue of lowering the minimum wage, which, again, I don’t believe was a matter of proper consultation. Certainly, that’s why I speak in support of this amendment, because I think there was a false premise behind the idea that youth workers somehow should be valued less. I heard talk – and I heard it even from some of the supporters and donors to the members on the other side who talk about the young workers – that somehow they’re privileged kids living in their basements who are, you know, just buying fancy iPhones with their wages and that therefore these kids don’t really need their money and that therefore it’s okay to pay them less.

A couple of comments on that point. First, I will say that I find it a very unusual argument from the members on the other side, that for some reason how you spend your money and whether or not you need it should determine how much you get paid, because that sounds very much like a socialist argument: each to earn what they need. And I don’t think that anybody, any of the donors on the other side, would suggest that very wealthy individuals in this province don’t need all that money, don’t need their luxury vehicles or whatever it is, and that therefore we shouldn’t pay them as much. I’m pretty sure there wouldn’t be support for that argument on the other side.

First of all, I really think that that’s a false argument, the idea that young workers don’t need their money as much, because I can tell you for a fact that there are many – and I know my colleagues from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and Edmonton-Ellerslie spoke a lot about their experiences and the people in their ridings, and I can echo that – young workers who are working because they need the money, because they’re supporting their families with their money. They are working the same jobs as people who are – there’s no difference between a worker who is 17 years and 364 days old and

an 18-year-old. How can we argue that that person is worth less just because they're one day younger?

[The Speaker in the chair]

My husband is actually an assistant principal at a north Edmonton high school. A significant number of students at his high school are newcomers to Canada. They are recent immigrants; they are refugees. We know first-hand that a lot of those kids work part-time jobs and not because they're using that money for fancy gadgets although if they wanted to, by all means, it's their right to do so. But these kids are actually contributing directly to their family incomes.

In fact, my husband and I took in and welcomed into our family one of these young students, who just graduated – I shouldn't say "graduated." He finished high school. He was a recent refugee from Somalia. He was the eldest of a family of six kids. Because he was focusing on trying to finish his schooling – he was working, and he was getting some pressure from his family to actually focus more on working, so that he could contribute to the family income, rather than complete school. He became a member of our family. We welcomed him in, and he lived with us for some time. We really encouraged him to finish school, but he got a significant amount of pressure. It was not uncommon in that community, in that group for families to expect the children to work, to contribute to the family income. He was the eldest of six kids, and, yeah, he was expected to act like a contributing adult to the family. Certainly, his income was not going to frivolous luxury items. His income was going directly to support his younger siblings and his parents.

You know, we can talk about young workers as if they're somehow privileged kids, but I can tell you that that is a privileged position, to be able to think about young workers in that way, because, really, there are many, many, many young people who are working hard.

Of course, let's think about those young people who do not have families that they're living with and who are actually supporting themselves. Interestingly enough, not to diverge too much, we know that this government recently introduced an amended Education Act, which will lower the age of compulsory education, which makes it easier for children to drop out of school at age 16. So there could be a lot of kids who are 16 years of age who are no longer in school – this government seems to be encouraging some of them to do that – and a lot of them are supporting themselves. To suggest that they don't need that money as much because they're young is simply a false premise. I think it's very clear that they do require that income.

It goes back to the basic principle that I think the members on this side have repeatedly stated, which is: equal pay for equal work. I really sort of object to that idea that young people should be worth less. Frankly, let's get back to what we should be making and how we should be making our policy and government decisions, which is based on evidence. I don't know that there is – I have not seen any, and I've read a lot of the materials that have been put out by the members on the other side – clear evidence that actually shows that lowering the minimum wage for young workers will actually increase jobs. It seems to be maybe a bit of a tipoff to perhaps some very vocal groups that support it and third-party supporters of the UCP. That would be, like, Restaurants Canada. I'm sure they have an interest in making sure that younger people get paid less. We know they do, as a matter of fact.

I want to go back a little bit to the concept of minimum wage. Again, I actually heard the minister of labour speak out earlier and mention – I heard him referencing the minimum wage and saying, "You know, it's a minimum wage, and employers could always choose to pay their employees more," which is interesting because the idea of a minimum means that there should be nothing lower than it. Yet here we have something lower than a minimum wage for some workers. It seems to be blowing the concept of a minimum

out of the water, really. It doesn't seem to exist anymore because now we have a minimum and a minimum-minimum. That just doesn't even seem to make sense.

Again, the arguments that they have made about how hurtful raising the minimum wage was for the economy: if it was so bad to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, I question why it wasn't part of their primary platform and why they're not rolling out a pick-your-pockets bill to lower the minimum wage. I'll tell you why they're not doing that. They're not doing that because they know that that's going to hurt Albertans. What they're doing is picking on vulnerable Albertans. They're picking on Albertans that – they're counting on it – will not be voting, that will not speak out. That would be young Albertans. Those will be young workers.

Mr. Eggen: They will vote.

Ms Pancholi: Well, in a couple of years they will.

In fact, I've been speaking with some. I actually got some feedback from young constituents in my riding who said that they can't wait until they can vote. I can't wait until they can vote as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. member for your comments.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising under 29(2)(a). You'd like to make a brief question or comment?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated the analysis that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was bringing forward. I was particularly interested in your labour background – right? – and speaking with your friends or colleagues in other provinces and talking about protections or the lack thereof between jurisdictions. I know we've been talking about the minimum wage quite a lot, but I'm very interested in this banked overtime issue because there's been some conflicting information put out and, I think, some disinformation, you know, but without the government actually backing away from the essence of picking the pockets of workers on banked overtime.

6:10 a.m.

You know, it's very interesting. I was door-knocking, as we all were, last month. I have pretty good knowledge of my constituents, dating back more than a dozen years sometimes. I've known the same people from running at different times. One place that I went to – and I was so surprised because I know that they were dyed-in-the-wool PCers, right? They always had a PC sign. I can see it in my mind's eye right now. We respectfully disagreed. There wasn't, like, animosity or anything. But when I went to knock on the door there, just in sort of early April, the gentleman invited me in and proceeded to just be absolutely livid around this banked overtime thing because this gentleman works on projects in Fort McMurray and so has very intense sort of working periods for a number of months and then comes back to spend time with his family. He has built a budget for his family and himself over a long period of time based on the regular hours that he works but all of this banked overtime, too. It's not like he's bringing in untold riches and it's just gravy; rather, it's the sum total of his budget, which is actually fairly modest. It's a middle-class area. The people aren't super wealthy, and neither is this family.

So I'm curious to know – and perhaps you can help me with this and help everybody, really, maybe understand banked overtime – have you had any observations of it in other jurisdictions? Perhaps you could help me with that.

The other issue that I was curious to ask you about was in regard to the minimum wage. One observation that I'm making: we, coincidentally, have the bill to reduce red tape on the floor here now. How would you sort of see, with your legal background, the

idiosyncrasies and the complications that are associated with having different minimum wages for different people, right? I've been a student of how things evolve over time in this Legislature. Once you get your foot in the door or there's a crack in something, then the wedge gets bigger. You start by discriminating against young people that are under the age of 18. You recall that a couple of days ago I did a member's statement talking about, you know, the gift that the UCP is giving to these grade 12 graduates. If they happen to be born in January, February, March, April, May, or June, or the other way around, I guess – if you were born at a certain time and in a certain month, then you're out of luck, SOL, getting paid 13 per cent less than the others. My point is: how would you see it in a legal or legislative framework of actually having increased red tape quite exponentially by trying to govern over a differential minimum wage for kids?

Then I would suggest that if this manages to sneak through, the next target will be restaurant workers who are waiters. We've heard all of this before. You know, it's a slippery slope. It's unfair, it's unjust, it's unequal and quite offensive, but it also reeks of great swaths of red tape in trying to regulate something like this. Perhaps you could help me with that a little bit, too.

The Speaker: Or perhaps not.

Hon. members, we are back on the amendment. Are there any wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning on the amendment to Bill 2. Of course, once more, the amendment says that Bill 2

be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

I guess I would just start my comments with some concern about the premise of this Bill 2, this legislation, being considered something that would bring investment to this province. I can see it now, a commercial done by the Alberta government saying, "Come and invest your money in Alberta because we can pay our workers less," not necessarily something that I would be so proud of shouting from the mountaintops.

I do want to begin with the fact that this legislation is proposing that we allow employers to pay workers less when it comes to banked overtime. Of course, currently the legislation in this province says that we can pay time and a half. I believe that was a change that our government made, something that I support greatly, and it's something that many other provinces enjoy within their legislation as well. Of course, the Premier did make comments recently that said that this legislation would not affect or diminish overtime pay. Now, I do take great concern with that. I think it's been brought up several times that changing this legislation will affect, for one, 400,000 Albertans who work overtime on a regular basis, and it is going to take upwards of \$2,500 away from them in a 12-week project.

Now, I think back to the work that I was doing before I was in this Chamber, a couple of jobs back, as an electrician working for a company that maintained and serviced and built dorm sleeping quarters for the Fort McMurray oil sands primarily. This company is bankrupt now, thankfully, judging by the way that they treated their employees. Of course, this is, hopefully, a unique situation, but it is a situation that happened in the province while I was working as an electrician. We would get into a situation where it was crunch time and we had to get these buildings, these dormitories out to Fort McMurray. My employer at the time would say: "Well, these need to be out tonight by 1 a.m. So, you know,

you started at 6 a.m. this morning; you're going to work till 1 a.m., past the 40, 44 hours in a week." I'm now working into overtime, but am I going to get time and a half for my banked time? No. Am I going to complain about it? Well, if I complain, they say, "Do you like this job that you have?" Hard to argue with that, hard for me to come back to my employer and say, "You need to do something about this."

Of course, there are labour boards and bodies that we can go to as employees, and those are important parts of our system that should be utilized as much as possible. But I was younger then, and I did want to keep my job. Of course, there are concerns about new Canadians that sometimes don't understand the legislation and don't understand their rights as well as somebody else.

Now, I do want to discuss the fact that not within this bill, which is also a concern, is the fact that we're talking about paying youth under 18 years old less than everyone else in the province. The fact is that these changes didn't come before the Assembly. I have great concerns with that because really it shows that the government didn't feel that it was necessary to have this conversation in the Legislature. Thankfully, I appreciate that the Speaker is allowing us to have this conversation though it is not within Bill 2, but it was a policy announcement at the same time as this legislation, so I do appreciate that.

Now, of course, when we were elected – in 2015 the NDP was elected to government – we followed through on our platform commitment to gradually phase in a \$15 minimum wage. Of course, before the rise in minimum wage, Alberta had the lowest minimum wage across Canada. That is a fact I imagine some Conservative politicians were quite proud of, and I'm sure that before the implementation of their order in council there were many conversations behind closed doors about whether or not they should return to being the lowest again because somehow that might be an advantage.

I have to wonder if the government members see the hypocrisy in their willingness to exploit youth for their labour, a group within our society that has very little ability to hold the members of this Assembly accountable. Thankfully, they will be able to do so in a few years from now, and I'm sure they will take great pleasure in voting whichever way they do. Maybe there are youth out there that support having their wages slashed. I find that hard to believe, but maybe.

6:20 a.m.

Now, I've been watching the debate around this bill that has transpired even on social media, and many people have asked how this move to lower minimum wage for youth workers is even legal – and it's come up a few times in this House now – considering that age discrimination is prohibited under the Alberta Human Rights Act, but I'm sure the government members have spent some time making sure that it's, you know, totally legal to pay people less money. That's great. Of course, within the current human rights legislation in our province age discrimination itself for people under 18 years old, well, apparently it's not a problem. Now, Speaker, just because it's not illegal to discriminate against people that are under 18 doesn't make it right, and just because it might create a few extra jobs, which in itself I don't think I've heard any real evidence through this debate that that's the case, it doesn't mean that we should be proud of lowering the minimum wage for the next generation of workers in our province.

The role of government is to protect the interests of Albertans, but with the pieces of legislation that we've seen so far, I tend to wonder why we need this Assembly at all. The members opposite seem to think the only people they need to represent are large corporations. Now, there's no doubt that we need to consider the

implications of legislative changes to all parties, but the government is doing a really poor job of showing that they have the workers' best interests at heart. We heard from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud that we aren't hearing a lot of conversation about workers. We hear a lot about making sure that we protect the rights of employers and making sure that we protect their bottom lines, but we don't hear very much on confidence for the workers who support these businesses, big and small.

Of course, this is not a new phenomenon. The privilege that we as members have is something that very few have the opportunity to experience. Of course, the opportunity is even less likely if you are a woman or a person of colour, a person with a disability, a member of the LGBTQ community, or low income, and in the instance that you are a combination of any of these groups, your chances of being elected to this Legislature are even lower. It concerns me that we are coming into this Legislature with the privilege that we do have – and I can respect that there are members on both sides of this House that are in these categories of people who are less likely to be elected, and I do appreciate hearing their voices as much as we can because it's important to have them here. But for us with the privilege that we do have to be making decisions about vulnerable populations and to say that these people don't deserve as much money as these people, I have great concerns with that. Of course, it's not lost on me, Speaker, that I'm a white, straight, cisgender male, but in this instance it is not me ignoring the intersectionality of the issue of minimum wages for workers.

It is clear, though, that historically and to this day the lack of diversity and the lack of inclusion within this Assembly has led to a system that often works against a large segment of our population, a population that has been left voiceless for far too long.

Moving on to the labour side of things, when we look at the provisions within this legislation regarding removing the card check certification, it's important to recognize that this is an attack on all workers of this province. Workers who are looking to unionize are often doing so because they don't feel that they're being respected by their employer, and they feel that they need better representation, and it's their democratic right to form a union if they have the right amount of people willing to do so within their organization.

Now, it's probably no secret. I've brought it up a few times in this House that I support unions, and I'm a member of a union myself, IBEW 424. I mentioned that I'm an electrician. Really, anyone who enjoys weekends or paid leaves, among other important things, should support the right to organized labour and the right to form a union. When we talk about representing and protecting the rights of workers, especially those who are often left without a voice, I am proud of the work of unions in our province and across the world through history. I'm disappointed that through this government's first few bills, well, this bill specifically, they've chosen to attack those very workers who have worked so hard to get us the instances that I spoke of.

Now, to take it one step further, this government felt it necessary, above their attack on unions, above their corporate tax giveaways that we discussed earlier, I guess yesterday, to attack those workers who work hard enough to earn overtime. Now, you are telling workers that they don't deserve to be fairly compensated even though they are going above and beyond to support their employer, and it's simply not fair. I mentioned that all of the employees were more than happy to push past a 12-hour day, past a 14-hour day. We just wanted to be fairly compensated, and what you're telling employers is that they have the opportunity to not do so.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum Relevance

The Speaker: If I might interrupt the hon. member, I just may remind members that when entering or exiting the Chamber, they might do so in a sleuthy-type manner.

I'd also just like to provide a little bit of a cautionary tale to those who are having sidebar conversations. The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday does have the call, and if you need to have additional conversations, perhaps those could take place in the lobbies.

While I'm on my feet providing cautionary tales, I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday was just going to tie his remarks into the fact that we're on the amendment and not on the main bill and provide perhaps a little bit more relevance as to why his arguments are in fact directed towards the amendment and not the main bill. I wasn't going to interrupt just for that, but since I was on my feet, I thought that perhaps I would just provide a little reminder to all members to keep their comments relevant to the topic at hand, and in this case we are on the amendment.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Debate Continued

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Really, the points that I've brought forward so far are once again just to clarify the fact that creating a system where we're profiting off taking away the ability, for one, or weakening the ability of employees to organize a union or taking away the ability of a youth, or somebody under 18, to get a fair wage based on the work that they're doing relates well back to this amendment.

Once again, I haven't heard any arguments from the government members that show that this will actually draw investment, that this is incentivizing more investment into the province. I think the case could be made for the corporate tax cut, which I have also argued against, of course. I don't see the connection so much with Bill 2.

Now, I do want to bring up the fact, just moving back to the youth wage, that my mother – and I've mentioned it once in this House before – was 14 years old when I was born. So, really, it's quite offensive to me, through the conversations that have happened in this House, to hear people saying – and I know it's been brought up a few times. One of the members opposite said that people under 18 years old, you know, don't have anything important to pay for. They're paying for candy. They're paying for video games and iPhones and things like that. My mother had me when she was 14 years old and raised me as a single mother. She continued to go to school. This current government is actually trying to stop people, it seems like, from going to school to get their full wages, \$15 an hour. But she continued to go to school, and she had very little support, if any support, from other members of the family.

I just wonder how much thought you've put into the impact of your minimum wage changes on someone like her, who chooses against all odds to support a child by herself at such a young age. Now, the fact is that by the time she was 15, she had more responsibility and had more life experience than many people who are reaching the age of 18 or are in their early 20s, and you don't seem to account for that in your minimum wage changes.

Now, think of the family units that you are harming through these changes. Not every 16-year-old is looking for some spare change, as I mentioned, and even if that was true, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud made the point, it's their money to spend on whatever they want. Over the last four years I have met with a pay equity committee over at AUPE, and I think it's an important point that needs to be

made: equal pay for equal work. It doesn't matter how old you are. If we decided to change it from not youth getting paid less but another segment of the population, say seniors, which would be horrible, just like these changes are horrible, I think that there would be an uprising and people would be very, very upset. But somehow since it's people under the age of 18, it's okay to do that.

The fact is that these changes are going to push more youth into poverty. What you're telling the LGBTQ youth that have been kicked out of their house, because we've weakened GSAs, and they've now been outed in their schools is that they're being forced to work full-time, and if they happen to make it into overtime, well, for one, they can't bank their overtime at one and a half, but also that if they choose to continue going to school, they're going to get paid less. They're trying to take care of themselves, but now we're making them even more vulnerable.

6:30 a.m.

You are telling the young single mothers in our province that their child care costs, their education costs, and simply their ability to stay out of poverty matters very little to you, and I have concerns with that. To make it worse, you're holding a carrot over their heads and saying: if you break 28 hours, we will give you \$15 an hour.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday. If I was not convinced before to vote for this amendment, I certainly am now because in looking at it and hearing what the member had said, clearly the pick-your-pockets bill is not what Alberta needs right now. Clearly, the pick-your-pockets bill certainly needs more consultation. I mean, hearing the stories of what some of the member's background was and hearing about what went on in his life and in his family's life I think is something that all members should take a very hard listen to. If they missed it, perhaps they should catch it in the Blues or in *Hansard* because that is the reality that so many Albertans face every single day.

I think it's shameful that government members want to pick the pockets of ordinary working Albertans, Albertans that are trying to make ends meet, Albertans that are trying to have a successful life and pay their bills. But the government is only interested in picking their pockets. I think that's something that they absolutely should reconsider and, really, is something that they absolutely need to take back to the public and see if there is more consultation that could be done on a bill that is rammed through, I would say, in the cover of darkness, Mr. Speaker. But it appears the sun is beginning to shine, and perhaps Albertans can start to see what is really going on behind this bill. Perhaps they'll really see the attack on workers that is going on in this bill. Perhaps the 400,000 Albertans that will lose their banked overtime will begin to see what the government is trying to do here.

I think that is something that is really concerning to all Albertans. I think it's something that all Albertans should look at and say: do they want to give up as much as over \$2,500? That's what the government is trying to do. They're trying to pick the pockets of ordinary Albertans. They're trying to reach in and take away what Albertans and ordinary workers deserve and have earned, Mr. Speaker. I think that's something that's very concerning to me.

I know the hon. member also spoke quite a bit about the wage differential and the minimum wage. I think that's also very concerning because, again, we've heard time and time again about vulnerable teenagers: the government is actually asking them, in fact, to drop out of school. That is the opposite of what any member

in this Assembly should do. We should be encouraging them to try to pursue their educations while also being able to earn a living wage, but if the government members in the front and backbenches simply don't care, then that is what Albertans will see as we move forward with this bill, Mr. Speaker. I think it's something that certainly young people in this province will see, and I believe other Albertans as well will continue to watch and see what the government is trying to do here. I think it's something that we can see, that this continued, sustained attack on workers and young people in this province is something that the government is doing.

I really want to thank my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday for speaking so eloquently about some of these attacks on workers and, in particular, how much workers in the labour movement have done for Albertans and the world in general, Mr. Speaker, because if you're a fan, like my colleague said, of things like the eight-hour workday, then perhaps you should be thanking the labour movement.

I think it becomes really clear that without the consultation, this bill does not do what it sets out to do. It will not focus on jobs. In fact, it will take jobs. It will hurt the people that already have jobs, and in fact it is something that will not stimulate our economy. People will not be able to spend in their local communities, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is something that is, frankly, quite shameful. It's something that the government needs to reconsider. It's something that the government members need to take a deep look at and see if they're okay with picking the pockets of ordinary workers, if they're okay with reaching into families and taking their money away, in some cases over \$2,500 per employee. That is something the government members really need to take a look at and say: yes; I don't think that the people working in my community deserve a fair wage, and I certainly don't think the people working in my community, if it's equal work, should get equal pay. That's what the government is saying when they move forward with stuff like this.

Mr. Speaker, it's really clear that they either don't know what they're voting on or they don't care. Both of those options are not something that I want to see legislators moving forward with. I wish the government would perhaps open their eyes, as again the sun is rising today. Perhaps they would be able to read the page a little bit better and finally see what it is they're voting on and finally see why this legislation is so damaging to individual workers, so damaging to families, and so damaging to communities. It's something that is really going to be harmful for people in their constituencies and in our constituencies.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the Member for St. Albert is rising to speak to the amendment.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure, actually, to be here today at almost 7 o'clock. I think breakfast might be served downstairs. It's probably like a stampede to get the tater tots. I smelled the waffles earlier.

It's my pleasure to be here, actually, to speak to the amendment, as I said, because I know that I was elected – we like to talk about elections a lot in this place, apparently, in the last couple of weeks – and sent here to represent the people that elected me and also to represent the people that did not vote for me. So it's my job to be here to represent all of them, actually. I do plan to do that, and that's why I don't have a problem with the hours, because I think it's our job as opposition, just like the members opposite who were here when they were in opposition, to propose amendments and alternate solutions, to critique the information, not to rush it through, and to

think about it, actually. So I'm happy to help with that, and that's why I do support this amendment.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

But, you know, in just listening, a lot of hours of listening tonight and last week, this week, it's pretty rich, actually, Mr. Speaker, that all of us in here are debating removing \$2 an hour from youth when all of us that are elected make at least \$150,000 a year. It's kind of rich that we're talking about \$2 an hour for people who are under 18 years of age. Now, our pages aren't here right now because they've gone home and they're probably not back to work yet, but those are some of the people that we're talking about. So we could have one page sitting on this side who's 17 and making \$2 less an hour than their colleague on the other side who is 18, making \$2 more an hour.

We're sitting here in this beautiful place, representing the people that sent us here, and we make about \$150,000 a year, some of us more. Ministers do make more. I believe the hon. Premier and the opposition leader likely do make more, and I do believe our Premier has a fairly healthy pension that he earned while he was in Ottawa. So it's pretty rich that we're sitting here continuing to debate \$2 an hour, why it's a good thing to provide more profit to business owners – and I'm not saying that profit is a bad thing. It's a great thing for businesses. But what are we debating? We're debating putting an open-for-business sign on the door on the backs of youth who make minimum wage.

I just did a quick calculation because it's actually been a long time since I earned minimum wage, and really, when I earned minimum wage, it was a heck of a lot lower. But, you know, if you're a young person, if you are a youth and you are working I don't know where – McDonald's, Tim Hortons, wherever you're working, likely in a fast-food place because a lot of people start there – they get some experience, they move on, and they do other things. But if they're working, say, two eight-hour shifts a week and earning \$15, that's about \$240 a week, or \$12,480 a year. That's a year. If they're working two shifts at \$13, the proposed lower rate, they're making \$208 a week, for a total of over \$10,000, almost \$11,000 a year. The difference between that \$2 an hour is \$1,664. So think about that. We're talking about almost \$1,700 a year to reduce that wage.

6:40 a.m.

Now, for a business owner it's something. Sure. It's money. Every dollar counts. But to a young person that's everything. So what do young people do with their wages? I don't imagine young people enjoy going to work at, say, McDonald's or KFC. No offence to these restaurants; my son has worked there, and I worked there as a young person. But I'm sure they would rather be hanging out with their friends or practising for whatever sport they participate in or going to a bake sale for their GSA. I'm pretty sure they would rather be doing something else than going to work.

But often youth are going to work because there is a need. Sometimes it's just for the extras, like we've heard from across the way. Sometimes it is maybe to upgrade your phone or to save for a school trip overseas somewhere. I don't know. That was not the story of my life. I worked because I had to. But there are more people that are working because they have to. That is the reality. We live in a society where we're polarized. We have very, very wealthy people, and we have very, very poor people. That middle class is getting more and more scarce. I think that, you know, although I am not speaking to that bill, introducing a massive tax break for corporations will only further exacerbate that spread. We know this because people have studied this and it's been done before. Sadly, we haven't learned those lessons, so we're going to have to learn them again, apparently.

Anyway, I'm going to go back to this amendment and talk about this. As I've been sort of watching the different things people are saying – and I always learn quite a bit when I watch videos or press conferences of ministers or other officials talking about the bills that they plan to bring forward. Anyway, there was a video posted. I think it was yesterday. I'm not a hundred per cent sure. It was the Minister of Labour and Immigration, and he was talking about the benefits of this move, of lowering youth wages, and one of the things he said was that over 30,000 young people are looking for work, and this bill will open it up for business. Okay. There's a correction here. It's easy for all of us to make errors because, you know, we're researching, we're going on the fly sometimes, trying to get information, so I get that it's possible to make errors. But I don't know; if I'm the minister of labour, I'm going to know these numbers, and if I'm going to take away \$2 an hour from somebody, I'm going to know these numbers. But, apparently, he did not. He said that 30,000 young people are looking for work. Here's the correction; 31,400 young people are looking for work, but they're not all youth. That's what he didn't mention. That number that he quoted are people that are 15 to 24, not 15 to 17. So instantly we see that this is an incorrect picture that he's painting.

The other piece that I was surprised to even hear him say, because that's just kind of a weird Internet meme waiting to happen, was about red tape, Mr. Speaker. One of the things this minister said was that this open-for-business bill will actually reduce red tape. You know, we were sort of lectured earlier. I guess it was earlier today or last night; I can't remember. We were told that we don't know anything about business: "What do you know?" and "Just a bunch of socialists." At least, we've moved up. We used to get called communists, so this is better. [interjections] They talked about red tape reduction. I'm glad you find this entertaining at this hour because it is kind of funny. I get it.

They talked about reducing red tape with these changes. Well, the last job I had before this job: I managed a nonprofit organization. It's a business that aims to use their profits in other ways. That's it. There are the same requirements, a lot of requirements that go along with the nonprofit. I'm sure a lot of the members across the way and beside me will know that. They have some experience with it. But I can tell you that overseeing the payroll of 200 employees – 200 employees – shift workers, full-time, part-time, casual, at different rates, in different places, with different qualifications for things: it is not easy, although, you know, larger organizations certainly send their payroll to a professional payroll company, somebody like, say, Ceridian. But it's still a lot of data entry, and more than that, it's a lot of people power at the front end to decide who gets coded where and where the differences are, and it's a huge job. I mean, the amount of red tape is astronomical. To have the minister stand up and tell us that this is going to reduce red tape – okay. I don't know where he got that from, but I guess we'll wait to see. I'm really hopeful that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction keeps an eye on that because that would be something to look at.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The other thing that I found kind of weird in his video – or maybe it was just a post – was that he was saying: "Yay. Alberta has the fourth-highest youth minimum wage." I'm sorry. That's just not good enough. We went from first to fourth. How is that okay? I mean, is that something to be proud of, that we've done this to youth? I don't know. I don't get it.

You know, the other thing, too, another reason why I think that this bill just needs to stop: you need to take your time and think about this and talk to actual people, not just the people you call up to come sit

in a room and advise you of exactly what you want to do, but you need to talk to real people, real youth, because this will impact people, not just someone saving for an extra iPhone. This is about maybe saving for school. This is about helping your parents. This is about supporting yourself. This is like the Member for Edmonton-West Henday telling us that his mother gave birth to him when she was 14. She made a choice. She chose to keep that baby. She chose to have that baby, she chose to raise that baby, and she raised a fine young man. But she also had to work and support herself. These are the people. These aren't anomalies or, like, a weird example that we just pull out. This is what happens. This is what it looks like.

For young people today the cost of education is high. It's very high. Sadly, I have two adult children who are still in university. I don't know how many more years that's going to go on, but one never knows. It is high, and a lot of young people do not have the luxury of having parents or extended family that can pay for these things, particularly if they don't live near a university that they can attend. Students are working from a young age, putting money away so that they can get an education because they know that that's what they need in order to do well in this world. That's what you're cutting. You're making them work more hours.

Sadly, I think that – sure, I think I'm a bit cynical. I always understood that there were lobbyists and people that got the ear of government, whether it was because of their access or money, but I've never seen such a clear, quick, abrupt example of that as I did before the election when I saw the Premier at an event, I think, with Restaurants Canada, and very clearly he was endorsing their policies or their vision for Alberta, and that was to reduce minimum wage. Actually, they went a little further, Mr. Speaker. They wanted to also reduce minimum wage for people with disabilities. Thankfully – I will give the Premier that – he did not force that. I think there was enough push-back on that right out of the gates that he stopped, so good on him for that. But he endorsed the moves that Restaurants Canada was suggesting. This is how you pay to play. It's not really about, you know: "These are my values. This is what's best for Alberta. This is what's best for the future. This is what's best for our youth." This is about: who do I owe? This is about concentrating power in the hands of a few. Not good.

6:50 a.m.

I've talked a lot about a lot of things, actually. One of the other things that I want to just get off my chest a little bit, that happened also at this Restaurants Canada event, was the phrase "modest levels of human capital." It's been explained to me, oh, a lot of ways. People like to explain things: "No. You don't understand. It's a term economists use." Okay. The way that this term was used that day: we all know what that meant. Now, the Premier did go on to explain what modest levels of human capital means – you know, less education, less work experience, all of these things – but that applies to a lot more people than people who are under 18. I'm going to take this back to people with disabilities because this is a group that is chronically unemployed. Chronically. High schools that have true inclusive programs work really hard with their students to teach them the skills that they will need once they graduate to get out there and find work. This is a group that is learning now, is going to learn very quickly that you are worth less, and this is a group that regularly gets labelled as being people with modest levels of human capital, as defined by our Premier.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, for your comments.

Just to provide a little bit of clarity, in light of comments from the Member for St. Albert – and in no way, shape, or form would the Speaker like to engage in any form of political debate. But for the benefit of all members our spectacular page team here in the

Assembly will all remain at their current wage and all be paid at their current wage. So just for clarity's sake.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really encouraging to see that you don't think the pages have a modest level of human capital.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the Member for St. Albert for her comments this morning. I think they were very important because she talked about people who are going to be affected by these changes that are, frankly, designed to hurt Albertans. They're designed to attack working people. They're designed to be negative overall for families. I think that is something that all members of this Assembly should aim to avoid. I mean, I think it's pretty clear, when you look at the legislation, as the Member for St. Albert has done quite thoroughly, that the legislation being proposed here needs more review and needs more public input. When you look at it, it goes after banked overtime. When you look at it, it goes after young people. When you look at it, it goes after people of modest human capital. It becomes pretty clear . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, section 23(h), (i), and (j); specifically (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." I appreciate what the member opposite is trying to get at, but he's making comments to suggest that members on this side of the House are trying to attack families, that we're trying to attack them and their livelihoods. That couldn't be further from the truth. You know, our job in this Chamber is to debate policy, debate good policy. It's not to attack each others' motives but, rather, to maybe disagree or debate the policy and not to suggest that we have, you know, poor motives for the people of Alberta. So I ask the member to retract his comments and, frankly, to apologize to Albertans because that is certainly not our motive. I would hope that he'd recognize that through discussing the reasoned motion which we are on today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising on the point of order.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think, given the fact that we've been here for a very long time, that this really is just a dispute of the facts. Both sides may not necessarily always agree on how we discuss these topics, but there is no intention behind it in that context. It's just a dispute of how we are continuing this conversation going forward. At this time I don't think there's a point of order, but I will wait for your ruling.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members, for your interjections.

I see the Member for Calgary-West is rising to provide new and additional information on the point of order.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I would like to counter the argument of my friend opposite. The time period that we have been here has no relevance on the comments that were made by the member.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-North West is rising on what seemingly is a very complex point of order.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's important that we use the English language as it is defined in the dictionary and as it's defined through intent. I certainly think that using the word "attack" – right? – is to lay some sort of imposition on another individual. You know, there are different ways by which a person may be attacked. One of them is through their pocketbook, quite frankly. So the hon. member, I think, has used the English language very well in this case.

The Speaker: Thank you for your very thoughtful interjection.

While I concur with the Member for Calgary-West that no matter how long we have debated a particular issue, we all need to be cautious around the words that we choose to use or don't use; however, in this case, I believe that what we have is a matter of debate. While we may not always agree with the opinions of those who sit on the opposite side of the Chamber to us, certainly they have the ability to share that opinion. While I did not hear any direct personal attack, the member opposite did use some strong language. Given the fact that we have been here for quite some time, I would caution all members, but this, in particular, was a matter of debate and not a point of order.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, I really do apologize if the members opposite don't realize what they're voting on and that what they're voting on is going to be picking the pockets of ordinary Albertans. I mean, that's something that – perhaps they should spend a bit more time reading the legislation they're voting on.

Very clearly here, as I was saying before, this legislation is bad for ordinary workers. It's legislation that attacks the people that my colleagues have been speaking about all night long. It's legislation that attacks ordinary Albertans and doesn't help spur the local economies because it takes money out of people's pocketbooks, Mr. Speaker, up to \$2,500 in some cases. But in many cases, for people who the government has deemed to have less human capital, it could take quite a bit more out of their pocketbooks, and I think that's something that's shameful. I think that's something that nobody in this House should support. I think it's something that we should all vote against here in this Assembly.

That's why I'm so proud to support this amendment. I'm so proud to support my colleague here from St. Albert. I'm so proud to be able to stand next to her and say that her concerns are ones that this Assembly needs to hear, Mr. Speaker, because those are the types of people who will be affected by this bill; 400,000 Albertans will be affected by this bill. The government needs to understand how this will impact people's families and people's lives. It's something that we certainly need to have a longer conversation about, it's something that certainly needs further input from the public, and it's something that we certainly need to look at this amendment and say: this is a reasonable amendment. This is something that makes sense because it allows us to have that longer discussion. It allows us to look at whether we're going to be forcing families to go to food banks instead of letting them bank their overtime, as they deserve, whether we'll be forcing young people to go to food banks while they're trying to save up for their education.

Really, when the government proposes legislation that actively encourages students to drop out of school, I don't know how that isn't an attack on young people, Mr. Speaker. It's something that clearly is offensive to young people, and that's why young people have been speaking out so strongly against this. It's something that's clearly an attack on families, and that's why people are so taken aback by this bill, and it's why we've been so proud to be able

to stand as the opposition and speak to this bill over and over again and talk about why it's important for Albertans.

The government clearly either has not read the bill, or they don't care what the bill says. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a shame. I think it's something that they need to review. [An electronic device sounded] Is that somebody else's alarm? Mr. Speaker, I thought there was a fine for something like that. My apologies.

Of course, certainly, I think it's something that we need to talk about, how after decades of inaction the NDP government finally brought in legislation that brought Alberta's labour laws up to par with the rest of Canada. If you were somebody who the Conservative government considered to have modest human capital anywhere else in Canada, you were able to have a good life as long as you didn't live here in Alberta. That's why it was fixed, and the labour laws were brought up to date.

7:00 a.m.

Now, without any public input, in the cover of darkness the government tried to ram it down Alberta's throat, that they needed to roll back all these protections, that they needed to roll back families' wages, that they needed to roll back overtime, and that they needed to attack families. That's something that I think members should be ashamed to be voting on. I think it's something that members should be ashamed was even brought to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because we should strive to do better. We should strive to have legislation that helps families and doesn't pick their pockets, and we should strive to have legislation that improves the lives of all Albertans and not something that was asked for by our wealthy donors and sponsors.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. member.

With respect to fines and cellphones I think that a little grace may be able to be displayed. I would only imagine that it was someone's alarm to be encouraged to come to the Chamber on this wonderful day.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to Employees of the Legislature

The Speaker: I'd just like to provide a very brief comment further to my earlier interjection. Again, the Speaker has no desire to engage in political debate, and I would just encourage all members of the Assembly to perhaps not utilize employees that may be in the Chamber or not in the Chamber and bring them into political debate as well. I think that if we could use some caution and discretion there, that would be advisable.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Any other members wishing to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this amendment. Certainly, I believe that we have this tool in place, the substitution "not now read a second time," at this stage of debate for a very good reason, and I believe it applies very well to Bill 2, as described on the notice that we put forward suggesting that this bill "will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary." I mean, I think that describes where this bill should be and where it should go quite accurately.

I believe that it should not be read a second time for other reasons as well. We know that this bill is to cut overtime for working people. As I had described earlier during this evening's session, this

idea of rolling back or taking banked overtime and making it less valuable to workers is going against an agreed-upon arrangement between employees and employers, and when people have those arrangements for their wages, to have it legislated to be rolled back is a very, very poor use of this Legislature's time and power.

As I described before, people count on getting banked overtime not just as some sort of special bonus that you win for working but as part of the essential wage for people when they build their budgets for their families. For people that work on project-based work sites such as in Fort McMurray or thereabouts or are working, let's say, on a shutdown – right? – of a plant in Fort Saskatchewan and so forth, you are working for a very concentrated period of time, and then you're done. You know, people build their family budgets and so forth based on banked overtime, and to change that formula, I think, is not fair. I think it achieves quite the opposite effect of what this bill was purported to be named by this government, an act to be open for business, right? It sounds more like it's an act to call it open season on workers, as the Member for Edmonton-McClung very cleverly coined.

There are a number of issues, I guess, that we haven't heard about, again a reason to suggest that this is not a bill that we should be reading for a second time.

I would go back to the changes that have been proposed around holidays and holiday pay as well. We made these changes to put Alberta in line with other jurisdictions around the country. So often when we're making reforms in many areas, Alberta would be the ninth or 10th province to have reforms around leave eligibility: maternity and parental leave, rest periods, overtime, critical sickness of a child, death or disappearance of a child, long-term illness or injury leave, personal and family responsibility leave, bereavement, family violence leave, domestic violence leave, citizenship ceremony leave, vacation and vacation pay, you know, Christmas. All of these things are reasonable ways by which to ensure a certain level of protection and security for workers and to ensure that we're being fair – right? – every step of the way.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that that's part of the way that you can actually make something open for business and encourage business and prosperity and so forth, to make the rules around labour fair and reasonable, right? Making cuts to things such as leaves for the critical illness of a child or eligibility for vacation pay for Christmas and so forth: I mean, when I actually articulate these things here in this House now, it sounds very much like something out of a Charles Dickens novel – right? – moving, rolling back. I'm thinking of *A Christmas Carol*, where Scrooge is giving his workers, like, a couple of hours off for Christmas and then rolling back and Tiny Tim and all that kind of thing, critical illness of a child. These are all the sorts of things that you see from a Victorian period. Here we are slipping back, in 2019, rolling back to the 19th century, you know. That's not the way to open for business. I think that's a way to show mean-spiritedness and to show regression, to move backwards rather than forwards, to move from a more modern outlook, where we can demonstrate reasonable labour law, to something that is less so.

To not read this a second time is an eminently reasonable approach, and I think that we have exercised to the fullest this Legislature's capacity to shine a light on Bill 2.

I think that a lot of people are not happy about this at all. I mean, I know that when I was out door-knocking during this last campaign, I had quite a number of people that were really kind of almost disbelieving at first that this was an element of the UCP platform. Then they very quickly looked because banked overtime was an integral part of their family budget, and they said: "Oh, no. Well, that's not something that I would support because they're literally taking money from my family." They're picking the pockets of middle-class people who work in the trades, especially, and putting them in a compromised position.

Always you have to judge a person on their actions, and you have to judge a government on their intentions and actions, too. For this to be the second bill of this new government, I think, is a bit concerning. You know, I'm always one to give out free advice to those who will listen, and I would strongly suggest that you want to put a positive front on your new government. You want to make sure that people see who you are. You're sort of defining your intentions. You're defining the future of the term of the government, and my suggestion is that you perhaps lead with something that's positive and not so negative – right? – this idea of rolling back labour reform, taking money for banked overtime.

This whole minimum wage thing: I think we've exhausted that, quite clearly. Having different minimum wages for different people of different ages, I mean, is Byzantine and confusing, and it's going to take quite a lot of red tape to sort that one out, I can tell you that, because here you have – I think there was a provision in this Bill 2 that talks about having some exemption if some kids are not going to school or something like that, where you can have, like, officers going out to check this out. You'll have to have a whole division of, you know, red tape artists to follow people around to see if they're going to school or if they used to go to school or whatever, just because there's some rule in Bill 2 that a regulation, red tape, puts them in that position.

7:10 a.m.

I mean, working as a teacher for 20 years, I know that lots of kids are working. They're not doing it, you know, for good times and frivolity. They're doing it to help to put money into the family budget. This idea that you might be born in this month or you're born in that month and that that will determine whether you receive a 13 per cent reduction in your salary is entirely unfair. It almost seems funny if it wasn't real. Here it is written in this bill. I really think that that doesn't need to see the light of day. Young people work at the same rate. They produce, side by side in a given situation, just the same as the person who is over the age of 18, right? There's no difference at all, and the expectations in a workplace, certainly, would suggest that the person that is maybe 17 must be working at the same level and the same rate and the same quality of work as the person that happens to be over the age of 18.

You know, as I said before, it's nonsensical. This whole argument that I heard from across the way that there are thousands of young people under the age of 18 that lost their jobs because of the minimum wage: I mean, that is patently absurd, right? It's untrue, and it's not defensible with either statistics or with logic as well. If one tries to move this forward in any way, the more ridiculous it actually becomes.

Honestly, it's one thing, people that are working under the age of 18 taking a 13 per cent cut – that's a practical problem – but again it signals direction, and it signals a bad intention. It sends a message to young people that is negative as well, that you're not as valuable somehow, your work in the same place, working side by side with others: sorry; you get paid less because of your age. It's discriminatory in that way, and it sends a message that somehow people are not equal – right? – for the things that they do and the way that they work and so forth.

Again, you know, when you get that message sent to you through law, it's something you carry with you in a broader way. You say, "Is the government here to protect me, or is it here to discriminate against me?" If it's the latter, then that is sending a message that we don't want our citizens to carry with them in their hearts for the rest of their lives. We teach in schools around the value of someone. We teach in schools about the value of caring and looking after each other and the value of a sense of justice, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that young people have a very strong and acute sense of

what is fair and what is not fair, and when that line is crossed in any given circumstance, they will carry that emotion around with them, quite rightfully, for a long time.

You know, we can avoid all of these things. We can avoid the embarrassment of taking away people's overtime pay for Christmas – right? – thus avoiding that obvious comparison to Charles Dickens and Scrooge and all of that. We can make sure that we are looking after people with their maternity leave so that they do know that they have those protections in place, because we want to support people that are having children and make sure that they are not being compromised with their paycheque for the sake of having a child. We want to make sure that people have the security to know that they have bereavement leave and compassionate care leave, that it's appropriate and fair, and that they have some vacation pay that is codified and not subject to the discriminations or the choices of an employer. Often we see this amendment being used in second reading of bills, and I've seen the varying value of using this referral amendment, but this time it really does stand out as being a useful tool. It's not necessarily meaning that we walk away from this issue but that we can talk to the public and see what the public thinks. Anecdotally, like I said, I mean, I didn't run a big survey with, you know, proper consultation on this, but neither did the government, quite frankly. I think that that's not an unreasonable thing to do.

I think it would be interesting and illuminating to hear stories of individuals, let's say, a young person who is working at \$2 less an hour because of their age, that they're not just doing it to buy a bicycle or concert tickets, but they're doing it because they're one of the main wage earners in their family. It's more common than you think, right? I know that when I taught high school, kids would often be struggling in school, and part of the reason was because they were working a lot of hours. There's an added sort of even more bizarre twist to this Bill 2. They said that if you're not in school and you're under 18 and you're working, then the law doesn't apply to you, right?

Again, you know, follow that thread, pull that thread, and where do you go? You end up setting up vulnerable kids that maybe are working and are in a vulnerable situation, and they will choose to drop out of school.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, for your comments.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising under Standing Order 29(2)(a) for a brief question or comment.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to keep it brief, as you know I do. Now, I really want to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for his comments. I think it was very enlightening to hear about some of the implications of this bill and some of the really, frankly, shameful things that are in this bill. I mean, it becomes very clear that this bill is designed not to help the families. It's designed to attack those young people that the member was speaking about.

Mr. Speaker, the discrimination that's happening in this bill: it's something that I think is really important that we talk about in this Assembly, because that goes to the core of why we are here, and it's to protect Albertans and protect their interests. Now, I think it's actually a real shame, after hearing such eloquent speeches from so many of my colleagues here tonight and over the last many hours, that very few, if any, of the government members have gotten up to protect and defend the discriminatory bill. I think it's something that's actually very telling. It's telling that the government is not interested in defending the bill that attacks working people, takes up to \$2,500 away during Christmastime – it's very Scrooge-like, like my hon. colleague said – does so much, in fact, that it can actually encourage kids to drop out of school. Maybe the Education

minister would like to speak to why she's encouraging kids to drop out of school. Maybe some of the backbenchers would like to speak to that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it becomes very clear that when a government presents legislation like this, it is damaging to families, it is damaging to young people, and it's damaging to ordinary workers. Attacking overtime pay, attacking the minimum wage, attacking the youth differential: these are things that the government ought to be able to defend. We've heard quite at length, with quite a number of stories tonight, why this will be so damaging and so bad for families, up to 400,000 workers across Alberta. That's many more families than just workers.

Mr. Speaker, the government isn't even interested in getting up to say why that's important, why it's important that they are going to hurt 400,000 workers. They're not even interested in defending their own bill, and that is very telling because Albertans will be able to see in the Assembly records that the government doesn't even think Bill 2 is a good bill. They won't even get up to speak to it. They won't even do their work, their job, to get up and speak today in the Assembly. It is their duty to defend government bills, and it's private members in the government caucus's duty to defend the bills that their front bench brings forward. But, clearly, those private members don't think the bill is good, or else they would be speaking to it.

7:20 a.m.

Clearly, the front bench doesn't think it's a good bill or else they would be speaking to it, Mr. Speaker. I think that's very concerning. I wouldn't mean to suppose what any members would wish to speak to in the future. Perhaps if they did get up and speak, then I would be corrected. But it is something that I find very concerning, that members aren't willing to stand up and defend this legislation. We have identified a number of very key and very significant flaws in the bill, and we've identified these flaws all night long. I'm sure the members by now will have the benefit of many of the Blues over many of the hours to be able to look in and see how they can find those fixes.

I know sometimes the members opposite – perhaps their staff weren't awake when they were or when we were in the Assembly, trying to do our jobs, but now I'm sure many of their staff are waking up and can do that research for them and help them perhaps figure out why they should be defending a bill that attacks workers. Maybe they can help them figure out why they would like to defend a bill that harms 400,000 families or attacks young people, encourages kids to drop out of schools. Perhaps the government would like to speak to that. Perhaps their private members would like to tell their constituents why they think students should be dropping out of school so they can get that \$2 raise, an over 13 per cent difference, Mr. Speaker. For some households that will be very significant. I mean, I really hope we'll be able to hear from some private members on why they think it's okay to attack individuals and families and working Albertans.

I really hope we'll be able to hear from some of the government front bench as well about why it's okay to attack working Albertans and attack their families and take away their overtime at Christmastime, Mr. Speaker. I really hope to perhaps hear from Mr. Scrooge himself. I think that would be something that would be very exciting for me. I think we'd be able to finally understand what it is the government thinks is so valuable about picking the pockets of everyday working Albertans, picking the pockets of families right here in this province. I think it's something that all members of the opposition would look forward to hearing.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you for your brief comments, Member for Edmonton-South. I'm not entirely sure. You made some reference to hearing from Mr. Scrooge himself. Certainly, you weren't referring to any member inside the Chamber because if you had been, that would have been wildly inappropriate and certainly a point of order.

During the next speech I would imagine that we will move through the 12th hour of the sitting today. I would just like members to perhaps extend their appreciation to our LASS staff and table officers. I would also remind all members, particularly those who have been with us through the last number of hours, to please ensure safe travels should you leave the Chamber today to return to either your residence or your temporary capital residence. Please make sure that you are governing yourselves accordingly.

Having said those things, we are back on the amendment. I see the Member for Edmonton-Manning rising to debate.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise 12 hours later, from the beginning of this debate, to speak specifically to the amendment on Bill 2, which reads that

... An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I'm going to build a little bit on some of my comments that I was making earlier around Bill 3, around how we seem to have a habit or the Conservatives seem to have a habit of recycling ideas and using them over and over and over again, with little success and/or looking for a different outcome. Now, the reason why I say that is that we've seen this recently in Canada, this bill. It was referred to as something different, obviously: Bill 47 to be specific, which is the changes to the Ontario labour and employment legislation. That legislation was actually passed in November 2018. I'll just read a little bit of an overview of sort of what that bill spoke to. Bill 47 does the following. It cancels the legislated hike of the general minimum wage from \$14 an hour to \$15 effective January 1, 2019.

Instead of freezing the minimum wage at \$14, on October 1, 2020, it will be adjusted annually. It removes the entitlement to personal emergency leave. It cancels a range of scheduling protections, eliminates the right to equal pay for part-time, contract, temporary, and temporary help agency workers vis-à-vis full-time workers. It repeals new public holiday pay, a cancellation introduced by Bill 148, scraps a provision introduced in Bill 148 that puts the burden on an employer to prove that a worker is an independent contractor rather than an employee. It maintains existing vacation entitlement, includes three weeks of vacation for employees with five or more years, and maintains domestic and sexual violence leave. That's good. It delays the planned repeal of the provision excluding from the scope of the ESA persons performing work in a job or work environment. And many, many, many other things.

Now, the intent, as we know from this bill in Ontario, was basically – I believe it actually has the exact same title as this current bill, except instead of An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business it was an act to make Ontario open for business. So we've seen this. We saw this in November 2018. We've seen the arguments. The arguments in Ontario were, "We're going to do this to help stimulate investment in Ontario, to bring new business into our province, to do all of these things," which is what Ontario said.

I've heard a lot over the last 12 hours about how this is about helping different sectors be successful, specifically looking at our hospitality industry. Well, let me tell you what's happened in Ontario over the last year since this Bill 47 came in. The hospitality

industry has actually had a decrease of minus 3.7 per cent in economic growth. And I can table this later today in regard to this.

I think the struggle that I have when it comes to these pieces of legislation is that there is evidence across this country that these policies don't work. Although they may be great political tools, we are seeing in Ontario that the argument that the Conservatives are currently using in this province about developing the hospitality industry is actually not happening in Ontario, yet it's the same bill with a different name, a provincial name I guess.

I mean, we've heard the Premier even make jokes about the fact that the Premier from Ontario and him are such great friends, and in fact he thought he came up with "make Alberta open for business" first, yet the Premier in Ontario adopted it and used it. When we look at what is happening in Ontario and we're looking at the direction that these worker policies are moving towards, I think that there's validity to the questions and the concerns about what's going to be happening in our province in the future.

We've been here before. You know, some of the new members have been asking me, as we're trying to get to know each other over the last little bit, about: "Why did you run, Heather? Like, you're a social worker."

An Hon. Member: Name.

Ms Sweet: Oh, sorry. It's been a long day. Thank you, hon. member. You're right. I withdraw my name.

I mean, people have asked, like: why did you run? Well, I was a social worker, which we established, I think, this week as well. Part of that was that I represented a whole bunch of workers in the city that were government of Alberta workers, that worked in child protection, AISH, PDD, a variety of different areas. We, at the time that I had decided to run, were under the hon. Premier Redford. Some of our members have heard this before, that, you know, we didn't have a great go when it came to labour relations under Premier Redford.

Again I will speak to the amendment and the fact that this is about the fact that this not be read a second time, because the whole argument here is that this is going to stimulate growth in the economy and that it's going to bring investment into the province.

7:30 a.m.

I will be clear that I think that's a great political tool and great language to use politically to actually start eroding the progress that was made around labour relations in this province in the last four years. The reason I say that is because what we're seeing in Ontario is that it's not effective and that it's not working. When it comes to the areas that these members in this House have specifically spoken to on the Conservative side, the job numbers don't match the argument. The bills are almost identical. So there's that component.

But the other piece is that prior to 2015 we had a huge fight on our hands when it came to labour relations, and we were starting to move backwards. The hon. members in this House remember those committee meetings that were around. They remember the rallies. They remember the conversations ...

Mr. McIver: Bill 6.

Ms Sweet: The Bill 6 back then, not the Bill 6 in 2015. But we could talk about Bill 46 or Bill 9 or Bill 10, hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

I've got lots of bills that I remember from labour relations as well around what happened in 2013 and 2014. At that time Bill 46 was the Public Service Salary Restraint Act, and that was going to impose a two-year salary freeze, renegotiate collective bargaining processes, remove binding arbitration. There was also Bill 45, the Public Sector

Services Continuation Act. This act significantly increased the penalties for illegal strikes by workers, to the point where they were going after individuals. They were going to go after individuals.

This all happened around when the Edmonton Remand Centre had their wildcat strike. At that time they legislated the workers back, and the government proposed to introduce harsh fines, up to \$100,000 per day, because they said that it was illegal. Those bills never made royal assent, and the reason that they never made royal assent was because, as the Conservative government very, very quickly learned, working people matter in this province. Working people have a voice in this province, and they are smarter than political language when it comes to trying to say that Bill 2 is all about economic growth and all about recruiting business in this province.

It isn't working in Ontario. The labour changes have been made. You are redoing the exact same thing that is happening in Ontario and trying to rebrand it as a new, fresh idea, which is very similar to what Bill 3 is. I was very clear about how, you know, even your Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, didn't agree with a corporate tax cut as being a way to stimulate the economy. I'll table that later this afternoon as well.

So, for me, I'm not sure I completely understand what the purpose of Bill 2 is when it's not actually achieving the outcome that the Conservative, the UCP, government is saying that it will. There's evidence to prove otherwise. What I see is that it's not about the economy in the context of investment into the province unless you want to acknowledge that it's at the expense of workers in this province, because that's what it's about. It's about eroding the labour codes. It's about changing what workers should be entitled to, which is a decent wage, compensation for their time, work-life balance with their family members.

It shouldn't be that workers are exploited for the benefit of an employer's dollar. It's just not the reality of how it is anymore. It shouldn't be that way. Workers should not have to – like, we had these fights way back in the day. During the Industrial Revolution people were put in cages and sent down into the mines, and they were exploited, and, you know, children were being used as child labour. We've seen all of this, and we are a much more sophisticated society than back then.

We have a responsibility to take care of each other in this province. One of our biggest arguments and one of our strongest strengths that we bring to this province is the fact that we are hard-working people who take care of our neighbours. If you're a hard-working person and you take care of your neighbour, then your employer should take care of you. It's just the way it should be.

Bill 2 just doesn't speak to that. Bill 2 is about taking advantage of people that maybe have disabilities and therefore can get paid less. Bill 2 is about the fact that if you're younger than 18, there is a loophole here where we can find a way to be able to take advantage of that. It is a bill that says that if you don't work so many days in a row, you don't get compensated at your pay. Bill 2 is about the fact that workers don't matter.

I mean, we have 400,000 Albertans who work overtime in this province. We all know our neighbours and our family members who deliberately take jobs because of overtime, because that's how people make their money. I have tons of my friends that love working on a Saturday and Sunday and working those 12-hour shifts because they get paid overtime for it, and they will ask for those shifts: in manufacturing, in our trades. Why shouldn't they be compensated for that? It doesn't make sense.

Why should an employer be able to say that their profit margin is more important, and where is the evidence to say that these changes are going to drive the economy? Where is the evidence? The evidence that I have says that in Ontario it's actually not doing what you're saying it's going to do, right? We talked about the hospitality

industry. This was something that they specifically asked for. There was a major reason for this. The hospitality industry has had a negative 3 per cent decrease from 2018 to 2019 in their yearly review, quarter after quarter, and this bill was acclaimed on November 30, 2018, in Ontario. So the evidence doesn't exist.

I would love for the members opposite to stand up and show me where the evidence is that makes the rationale for this bill make sense, but we haven't heard it. We've heard lots of talking points, we've heard lots of political points about why this makes sense and that people have asked for it. Of course employers have asked for it. I mean, if you can find a way to undercut your expenses and make more money, of course you're going to try to do that. Like, that's just basic business sense. You find a way to work through your taxes. You find all those different things so that you bring more money home for yourself and your business. That's how businesses are successful, right? But should that be at the expense of workers? Definitely not.

Again, when we talk about this amendment, I would like to see the evidence. You want us to vote on behalf of Albertans in support of Bill 2, and you want to be able to say: well, Bill 2 is all about drawing investment to Alberta and to stimulate the economy. So show me the evidence. Show me where you have your . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Edmonton-Manning. This is such an important bill. It's such an important bill, and that's why so many members of the opposition have gotten up today and yesterday to speak to this bill. It's something that we are so proud to be able to fight, because we know that it's picking the pockets of everyday Albertans, just as the member pointed out very clearly. And just as the member pointed out very clearly, this is a bill that attacks workers, attacks the 400,000 workers that do overtime work.

It's a bill that will go after young people, go after labour, go after tradespeople. Mr. Speaker, it becomes very clear that this government either does not understand what they are passing, or they don't care. If they did, they would get up in this House and defend this bill. The front bench would get up and defend the bill that they brought forward, or the backbench would get up and defend their minister, but they have not done that. They refuse to do that because, I believe, they think it's as bad as we say it is. And if they don't, they could get up and clarify that for us, but they refuse to because it becomes very clear that they know this will hurt ordinary Albertans. This will hurt families, and this will hurt the people who work the hardest here in our province. This will hurt our constituents.

7:40 a.m.

The government knows very well that they did not consult on this, or else they would have gotten up to speak on it. They know very well that Albertans will not support this if sunshine is brought to this bill, Mr. Speaker, or else they would get up to speak to it. They would get up and defend the legislation that they tried to hide under the cloak of darkness last night. But here we are, the sun is shining, and we are able to debate this legislation here in this House.

We know in the opposition that this is designed to pick the pockets of ordinary working Albertans. It's designed to hurt families, to take away their hard-earned pay, their hard-earned overtime, designed to make it so that students have to choose between whether they should go to school or get a 13 per cent raise. The Education minister should get up and explain why she's going

to defend a bill that encourages students to drop out of school, Mr. Speaker.

This is a bill that is, frankly, shameful. If the front bench cared or if the backbench of the government cared, Mr. Speaker, then they would get up and defend this bill, but they refuse to. They know it is a bad bill, and that's why they won't speak. It's because they know that they have not put forward a bill that helps Albertans. They've put a bill forward that helps their wealthy donors, and that's what they're fighting for here when they don't speak. When they refuse to get up and talk, they know they're defending their wealthy donors and their sponsors. And that's fine. If that's the message the government wants to send to Albertans, that is absolutely fine, because we know the opposition will continue to stand up for the rights of working people. The opposition will continue to stand up to defend Albertans and defend their rights in this Assembly. When the government tries to pick their pockets, we will be here to tell them: no. We will be here to fight against that.

The government clearly has no defence or refuses to give one, and either of those is a condemnation of their position on this, Mr. Speaker. This bill is very clearly a bill that hurts families, and if the government disagreed with me, they would get up and say so themselves. But, very clearly, they are not interested in that. They're not interested in getting up. In fact, you'll hear on the cameras that they are actually laughing at the seriousness of this bill. They are laughing at how important this is for families. They know, because they are appeasing their wealthy donors, that this bill doesn't matter for Albertans because they don't care about Albertans. If that's the position they're wanting to take by not standing up in this Assembly, then that is the message Albertans will hear today. That is the message Albertans will hear because we know they're watching. We know that they are standing up with us and hearing what we are saying and pointing out these really important issues in this bill. That's why it needs to go back for public input. That's why it needs to go back for more consultation.

Really, clearly, what is happening here is that the Conservatives are trying to pick the pockets of Albertans, and if they aren't, then why won't they get up and speak to it? Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives are not trying to attack families, then why won't they get up and defend it? This really, clearly shows that they either are intentionally trying to pick the pockets of Albertans or they don't know what they're voting on. I don't know which is worse, whether they are intentionally being harmful for families or they're actually being negligent about it. Either of those sounds terrible to me. I think that certainly Albertans expect better from their government. They expect better from their private members on the government side as well, and that's why our opposition here will continue to fight against this bill. We will continue to make sure that the important issues and the stories of everyday Albertans, the stories of our constituents, are told in this place, because those are the people that matter.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you once again for your brief comments, Member.

Anybody else wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Go ahead, Member.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm afraid I will likely not have the same energy as my colleague from Edmonton-South, but I will try. I think this is the first time I've been up for 24 hours straight in a long time, so here we go. Maybe the last time was when I was a teenager, and that's a good segue because I'd like to talk a little bit about the youth wage in particular and about the importance of this amendment, of not reading this bill a second time.

I've talked to this House a little bit before about the fact that I was a high school social studies teacher in rural Alberta, and I've had the opportunity to speak with young people, with students in my constituency about just how discriminatory this decision to cut youth wages from \$15 to \$13 an hour will be.

Now, some of my colleagues in this House have shared some really personal stories as well. They've talked about the fact that, you know, this is about equality and this is about fairness. I want to quote a few folks here. I'm a big fan of bringing in evidence and bringing in research.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear.

Member Irwin: Yes. It's something that's important to me. So I'm going to share from a few sources here, and I'll table any of the ones that haven't been tabled yet.

The first one I want to speak to is a quote from the executive director of Public Interest Alberta. What he said was:

These changes will create a perverse incentive for employers to maximize profits by hiring youth instead of other workers because they can be paid less for doing the same work . . . This is clear discrimination against a demographic of workers who are not even able to express their opinion at the ballot box.

There are a few things to unpack in that quote there, but on this perverse incentive: again, we know that there will be employers who will choose to exploit younger workers. As one of my colleagues said earlier: what's the difference between someone who is 17 and 364 days old and someone who is 18 years old?

Why I also wanted to touch on this quote is the second piece there: "clear discrimination against a demographic of workers who are not even able to express their opinion at the ballot box." Well, these are young people who are working, who are in some cases supporting their families. My colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud talked about the fact that, again, we know – we've heard her own family's experience of a lot of young people who are supporting their families. What might be a small difference in wage means a huge amount to those families.

These young people aren't able to vote yet. They're going to be able to vote in a couple of years. I know I've got a few colleagues in here who are teachers as well, a high school social studies teacher, in fact. You know, if you've ever taught a group of teenagers, the power of an engaged group of teenagers is something to be seen. So I do wonder how this decision will carry out in a couple of years, once those teenagers are of voting age. I'd be curious to see the power of them at the ballot box.

The other thing that I wanted to point out – this is Joel French from Public Interest Alberta; I'll give him a shout-out – is the final quote. He says:

We can easily predict that this will cause a drop in employment for vulnerable groups of adult low wage earners, who tend to be young adults, women, and people of colour . . . These groups are already struggling in our economy, and the last thing they need is an attack on their employment.

My colleague from Edmonton-West Henday spoke about the fact that unfairly, probably inequitably affected by these changes are folks who are, you know, people of colour, from the POC community, young adults, women. I appreciated your comments around sort of an intersectional approach to this because we do have to recognize our own privilege in this House. It's sometimes hard to think about the experience of some other people who will be unfairly affected by these policies. I urge my colleagues across the floor to consider intersectionality in their approach, to consider the perspectives of others who may not have had the same lived experience as them.

The next thing I wanted to speak to – I'm going to continue on this youth train because, again, it's something that's important to me. My social studies teacher colleague there will know that we talk a lot about engaged citizenship, active, engaged citizenship. I'm going to be the voice for some young people. I know I'm not a super young person myself anymore, but they're not here in this House right now. I'm going to quote from some young people in a moment.

7:50 a.m.

Before I do that, I want to give you a few more facts. The Alberta Federation of Labour estimates that there are approximately 35,609 workers in Alberta aged 15 to 17 who will be negatively affected. Thirty-five thousand: that's a significant number. This is going to make life harder for a lot of young workers who are either saving for school, as I said earlier, or contributing to their household's income. Now, the government has told us – I am still quoting the Alberta Federation of Labour here – that they are taking these steps to try to address the higher unemployment rates, the lower labour force participation that they point to in that age cohort of 15 to 24. But, again, this is a clearly discriminatory policy that tells young Albertans that the work that they do is worth less, is devalued, than that of other Albertans.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the – the Alberta Federation of Labour, actually, did some really good interjurisdictional comparisons to bring in, again, an evidence-based approach to this. I'm not saying that the members across the floor didn't look at research and evidence, but I do question in some cases, especially when it comes to the youth wage here because the evidence is pretty clear. Now, there have been youth differentials proposed in a number of other jurisdictions as well, as I noted. One interesting one is actually in Denmark. One empirical study analyzed the impact of Denmark's youth wage differential and found that the employment rate craters for young people once they graduate to the universal wage by about 33 per cent.

What happened in Denmark is basically that a youth minimum wage led to a lot poorer outcomes for workers aged 18 to 24. As those workers are entering adulthood, as they are, you know, in some cases potentially hoping to enter school or may be taking on family responsibilities, there is significant evidence from this study that shows that unemployment and job loss at this time in a worker's life, that time of instability, create a scarring effect – that is what they say – which basically sets them up for failure for the rest of their lives, dramatically worsens their future employment prospects and their lifetime earnings. We've heard this argument that this is just a small amount of money, but again, looking at some of the research from around the world, it shows that it's not a small change. The choices we're making now in this House could be impacting a whole cohort of young earners in this province.

One of the things I said that I would do is give some research from both locally and around the world. But I think what's more important here, because we don't have anyone speaking out right now that is in this age cohort, is to hear from some youth. We have the value here in Edmonton of having the City of Edmonton Youth Council. If anyone has followed the City of Edmonton Youth Council's work – I know my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre is nodding his head because he and I both know that they do incredible, incredible work. They're a cohort of young folks who work closely with city council, who actually take on a lot of initiatives on their own, by their own devices. I'm actually going to be speaking to them on a panel this weekend. I look forward to hearing more from them about how they view this differentiated wage.

What I want to do is quote from an article they wrote in the *Edmonton Journal* – as I said, I will table this if it hasn't been tabled yet – and then I'm going to add a little bit of my own flavour to it

as well because, as I've said, I've heard from youth as well, and I want to share some of those stories. This one young person notes in this article that

to devalue youth wages compared to the rest of Alberta's population is to unfairly discriminate against young people in the workplace on a set of unfounded assumptions about their work ethic and qualifications purely correlated to their age.

Again, I think this age discrimination piece is a huge one. I'm actually still, believe it or not, a millennial. I'm what they call an elder millennial. [interjection] I know. I look a lot older. This short time in the Leg. has aged me. But one of the things that frustrates me to no end is when I hear these stereotypes about millennials being lazy and not working hard and not contributing to the economy and whatnot. I get very much the discrimination that these young people are feeling when they're hearing that, "Oh, you don't need that difference in the wage; you're just going to waste it on frivolities," whatever it might be.

Now, these young people go on to say that

youth who do the same work as any other worker in the same position should not be placed under discriminatory payment as a result of their age. This policy in its current form does not consider the merits of individual workers or their living situations, and although it may have the potential to create increased employment opportunities, the jobs created would be less beneficial for the youth who need those opportunities the most.

That's the one piece that I'm quite concerned about, our vulnerable youth. One of the members talked earlier this evening about vulnerable youth, whether it be, you know, youth from refugee immigrant families, whether it be LGBTQ youth. A lot of these youth don't have the financial or social supports necessary to provide for themselves. As we said, a lot of these same youth are wanting to save up for education, whatever that might be, whether it's a trades route, whether it's university, so they're having to balance a whole heck of a lot.

I was talking to somebody else who relayed the story of a young person who is also caring for their siblings. Basically, that child was a parent to two other children at a very young age. Again, you're having to manage school. You're having to manage planning for your future education. You're having to manage family responsibilities. In some cases you're having to, really, be one of the primary providers for your family's household income, which is so much of a burden to bear, for sure.

Now, I'm just going to talk a little bit more about what the City of Edmonton Youth Council has to say on this. I talked a little bit earlier about the fact that, again, these are folks who are impacted by this policy that are not able to vote yet, and they point out: how is it fair that the perspectives of us under the age of 18 are not able to be heard during the election, during the voting process, yet the Premier didn't reach out to us? Again, this is why I would urge the House to consider this amendment. Why not go back and consult more heavily with a lot of the youth across the province? Get a wide cross-section. Hear their lived experiences. Ask them questions. Talk to your constituents. Maybe you have. As the Member for Edmonton-South said, we just haven't heard a lot of these stories from the members opposite. The lived experience of youth is valuable, and it can tell a lot of insights about the impact of this policy. Again, it's beyond just the economic benefits. These are humans we're talking about. These are Albertans although they may not be voters.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, as I said, the other thing that I'm concerned about – and we were chatting about this earlier as well – is the fact that some of

these young people may be encouraged to drop out of school. We still have some very high dropout rates here in Alberta. We talked about that we've done some work to try to address those, but they're unfortunately not decreasing as rapidly as we would like. I do worry in particular – I've got some stats – that the dropout rates are actually highest in rural areas and small towns. Now . . .

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I'm sure that someone will be happy to provide you some additional moments to provide comments if you would like because, as we all know, we have Standing Order 29(2)(a) available.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning in the House as the sun has risen and as have many other members of this House and made their way here to continue to support this debate. Indeed, to be here in the Chamber this morning – of course, we've had both *Sunrise and Sunset* for a few days here from our artist Mr. Alex Janvier, and now we got to experience them both in person here as well.

I've been appreciating the words from my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. She's had some good thoughts. She's been speaking a lot about youth. That makes sense, she, of course, having been involved in the education sector for some time. I think she's had many good conversations with youth. It's of great interest to me. I certainly have many young people that live and work within my constituency. I was thinking about the students.

8:00 a.m.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been called.

Mr. Jason Nixon: The hon. member, I believe – and it has been a long evening, so I could stand to be corrected – moved the motion that we are debating and has spoken already on this motion.

The Speaker: I will confirm with the table.

Having said that, he was standing on 29(2)(a). As such . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: I think that he should be allowed to continue, then.

The Speaker: . . . I concur with your position that he should be allowed to continue.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that the hon. Government House Leader has had a long evening himself. You know, it's understandable. At this point a few things are going to slide.

But as I was saying, you know, I do have a number of students. I spoke earlier about the kids in the hall bistro. I spoke about the Boyle Street Education Centre. I am also very fortunate to have Centre High located here in my constituency at the Boardwalk Market. Many young people are completing their high school education there and are themselves participating in the workforce, in fact participating in some excellent work training programs. Again, Mr. Speaker, I see no reason why those students should be paid a lower wage for doing the same work as others are doing at a higher wage.

Given that, my interest in that subject, I would love to hear more from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on that topic.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has approximately three minutes if she would like to provide some additional comments.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. Our ridings are neighbouring, so we share a lot of similar issues, and I've really appreciated getting to work with him and talk about some of our shared issues and shared opportunities.

I was just starting to say there that the school dropout rates are actually the highest in rural areas, in small towns. Having taught and been a vice-principal out in rural Alberta in small communities – Bawlf, Alberta, was where I spent most of my career – I know that a lot of those students would likely have not had to be too convinced to drop out of school if there was a higher wage. We did a lot of work to keep kids in school. We had the fortune of having a lot of really good work experience programs, RAP, registered apprenticeship programs, that really kept a lot of our students engaged in school. For some of them poverty was an issue, and I would worry very much about the lure of being able to drop out of school because of that higher wage. So I think it's a real issue. I will have to chat with some of my former colleagues out in rural Alberta, just to hear what they're hearing – right? – some of those teachers and counsellors who were working so hard to keep kids in school. Yeah. I think I've shared a lot on the youth piece.

The only other thing I wanted to mention was just on the OT, on the overtime, because I'd like to get that on the record, too. I mean, I grew up in Barrhead, Alberta, and my dad worked in oil and gas for about 40 years near a place called Swan Hills, Alberta. He worked a lot of overtime, and, you know, he sacrificed a lot of time away from the family. I would worry about the rollback because we know that oil and gas workers will be affected the most by this.

I can give other examples as well. I gave the example of a fellow I used to date in Forestburg back when I was dating fellows. He worked at the power plant, the coal-fired power plant out there, and same thing. Trying to get ahead, he put in a lot of overtime hours. I can't imagine the impact that that would have. He is now married with a few kids. Happy for him. Again, I can point to countless stories: my dad, him, and a lot of folks particularly out in rural Alberta, but not just in rural Alberta because I heard it at the doors in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, which is certainly not rural Alberta.

As I said, I just wanted to put that on the record as well. I've spoken a lot about youth and my concerns there. But on the overtime concerns I think that others of my colleagues have spoken a lot. I know that my colleague in Edmonton-West Henday spoke to his own history as a union worker with IBEW. So I will finish there.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We are back on the amendment. Is anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View rising to debate.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak with respect to this bill and this amendment. You know, I think certainly the members on this side of the House and I think on all sides of the House are probably fairly familiar with this issue. I think there are probably a number of things that can be said about, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was talking about, the sort of use of differential minimum wages was, of course, a regulation related to this piece of legislation. I think a lot of these changes are problematic in the sense that they hurt maybe not the most vulnerable in our society but those that are close.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I think back over a number of years, and I had the opportunity in my last opportunity to speak to discuss some of the various and sundry jobs I worked over the course of my life, and certainly working for a number of years at a chain restaurant and working for a number of years at a bank, I'm familiar with what it's like to work for minimum wage, at or near. You know, it's really challenging. I think people sometimes forget the challenge. They talk about youth minimum wage, and I can remember someone saying at one point: oh, well, maybe at the minimum wage you can't achieve all your dreams. Well, the dreams that you're trying to achieve, generally, when you're working minimum wage are both shelter and food, which I think ought to be fairly achievable dreams.

There's a lot of stress and challenge that comes with that. Certainly, when you're young, you're maybe capable of more things than you are – at some point I can remember working a job and being in university and studying all night and being remarkably coherent the next day in a way that maybe isn't always the case anymore. But I still think that even at that age you deserve to be able to seek whatever it is you're seeking. I think it's not really the government's place to judge and to interfere and to consider what it is you are or aren't doing with your money.

I think that if we're saying equal pay for equal work, which is what we're saying here – honestly, if we go into the history of this, if we look back, very similar arguments to this were advanced at one point for why women ought to have a differential minimum wage, because it was only a secondary income and they could rely on their husbands, who were working real jobs. They didn't really need; they were just contributing to extra things in the household. They weren't having to pay for things. But that, of course, wasn't the case for all women then, as it isn't the case for all youth now. I think that when we look back at this decision from the perspective of history, we're going to have a similar reaction, much like we look back now and we say: "My goodness. How could they have thought that? Who could possibly have believed that a woman's work should be worth less, should have a lower minimum wage than a man? Who would have believed that that kind of discrimination was appropriate?"

I think, you know, in 10 or 20 years, or some of us right now, we're going to look back at this decision, and we're going to think exactly the same thing. At the end of the day, while youth may not vote, they are still persons, too, if you will. They still have needs and desires. They still have things that they want to achieve. I think that when we delve down into whether or not they're using their money appropriately, it's just overly paternalistic, and I don't think it's reasonable. I think they have just as much agency and just as much right to decide what it is that they want to pursue.

In a lot of cases it probably is education, and even if it isn't, even when it comes to education – I went to postsecondary for rather a long time. After graduating with a psychology degree, I went back and took a philosophy degree, and a lot of people may have suggested that that was not the best use of my funds. Ultimately it led me to law school and on this journey, and I don't regret any moment of it. I think that a youth, regardless of what they're choosing to do with their money, regardless of whether you think the philosophy degree they're taking is a worthwhile degree, deserves to make those decisions for themselves. They deserve to be treated as equal participants in society because they are doing the same work as everyone else.

8:10 a.m.

In fact, to suggest that someone a month before their 18th birthday isn't capable of performing a task as well or as adequately as someone a month after their 18th birthday I think is just a little bit absurd. I think the line is arbitrary, to say the least. Given my

reliance on some of my younger colleagues with respect to technology, I suspect that there are a lot of people who are 16 or 17 years of age who are probably better able to do certain tasks than, say, someone of my age and experience. Those are a few of my thoughts on that.

I also think that at the end of the day, ensuring not just the minimum wage but a lot of protections in this bill gives people the ability to have some power in their working situation, the ability to hold their heads up high, the ability to make their way in the world. We talk, I think, a lot about ensuring social mobility and ensuring that people are able to do the best for themselves and are able to put themselves in the best situation. I actually think the best way to ensure that is to ensure that they have appropriate protections at work.

I certainly remember working for a number of years at a bank, that shall remain nameless. Ultimately this turned into a court case elsewhere, not here. There was a tendency to skirt those protections, to say: oh, well, you're not required to stay with a customer who stays late and only get paid until 4:30, but if you're not balanced, you're in trouble. There was usually half an hour to 40 minutes of work that needed to occur in order for that to happen, so if someone was still there after the doors closed and you had to help them until 20 after, you were staying until 5 and that's just the way it was, even though you only got paid until 4:30. People like me were able to push back against that, but not everyone was. There were some younger people who maybe didn't have parents in the same position that my parents were in, who would have been able to help them out if they had lost their job. There was one woman that I worked with who had two kids and she was a single mother. She needed that job. She lived paycheck to paycheck, and she wasn't able to stand up for her rights in that context.

That's why we have bodies like this, right? People say, "Oh, well, it's fine. Workers can just stand up for their rights," but the history of that has been that there has had to be legislative intervention. There was a long time where there were no occupational health and safety rules at all in this country and in others. As is often the case with things, when we know better, we do better, and we move forward. We provide more power to those who are the least empowered. I think, for a number of years, we moved in a very positive direction with that. We moved in a direction where those who had nothing and were trying to make their way in the world had enough rights that they were able to sort of make that transition, and they were able to move where they wanted with sufficient hard work.

But I think, I would say, arguably since the mid-80s we've kind of been sliding in the other direction. The wages of those who earn the least have been slipping relative to the wages of those who earn the most, significantly. I personally, philosophically, tend to pin it to this "greed is good" thing that happened in the '80s, which I think has been very destructive to society.

Legislatures the world over have stepped back for fear of interfering, but either way, when you're amending a law, it's a law. We have laws in place, bankruptcy laws to a certain degree – less so now in Canada, although still, I think, in places in the States – that tend to privilege corporations, that tend to privilege those who are able to contribute capital as opposed to those who are able to contribute their labour. In any event, the system doesn't run unregulated. I mean, that hasn't been the case for probably centuries. To say that one form of interference is good and beneficial and one isn't: I mean, yes, that's the case but to suggest that there are classes of places in which we should interfere and in which we shouldn't – basically, usually those classes are suggested to be interference which help those that are wealthiest, who have inherited their capital and have that capital to contribute. They are

beneficial and that those interferences that help those who don't have capital, who don't have inherited wealth, who only have their hard work and their dedication and their smarts to contribute – those regulations tend to be classed as that. I think that's really sad. I really do, because I think that working hard and your character and who you are moving forward is so much more important than what you've inherited, and that's why I think that some of these moves are so incredibly important.

I think that another thing that's worth talking about, again, is the importance of unions, what they do and how they impact. You know, certainly, I've mentioned this before, but I remember that when we studied various human rights cases in law school, it was interesting to discover that the names on those cases were not usually the names of the individuals. They were usually unions because it arose out of what's called a grievance, which is where the employee and the union go to arbitration, and then it usually goes to a judicial review and so on and so forth. But many of those cases arose, again, because those individuals said, "My rights are being violated, but I don't have the strength to stand up to my employer; I need this job because I need to feed my kids" or whatever else. So those employees were able to pool their collective resources. They were able to come together and say: none of us want our rights violated, and whatsoever you do to one of us, you do to all of us.

I don't know. To me, the best, in some ways, in human society is everyone coming together and saying: "If you violate the rights of one of us, you violate the rights of all of us. We're all going to stand up, we're all going to pool our resources together, and we're all going to fight that collectively." That is, by and large, a huge portion of the work that unions do, to enable those workers to come together and to collectively fight for those rights.

You know, we talk a lot about interest arbitration, and that usually has to do with pay and working conditions and various other things that are set up in the contract. But what I'm talking about here is grievance arbitration. That's essentially when an employee comes forward and says, "The thing that you did to me isn't fair" for whatever reason. Sometimes it's the employer, too, but often it's the employee.

We've seen huge advances. The B.C. firefighters' case is one of my favourites, and it talks about setting a standard which is unrelated to the work being done, so a standard which is unnecessary in order to complete the work but which unfairly discriminates against women. Essentially, women were excluded not because they couldn't do the work but because someone had set up a standard in order to get the job, but the standard was something that wasn't required in order to perform the job. Folks recognize overt discrimination in a way that they maybe don't recognize that kind of systemic discrimination.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think that by ensuring that workers have the ability to come together and to vote democratically, not to have it imposed on them but to vote by majority, just like we vote by majority in this House – like, the members opposite are so fond of reminding us what the will of the majority was – saying that workers should be able to vote by majority and bring themselves together collectively, in order to achieve those ends, you know, it's really critical to ensure that individuals have that, because what it does, in my view, is that it raises the standard of living of us all.

Actually, what keeps springing to mind is: whatsoever you do to the least among us, you do unto me. I actually think that is a religious quote. You know, I feel like that's the way we should behave in society, and that is why I am in favour of this amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

8:20 a.m.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview rising.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise, and in a moment here I will direct my question to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View about her remarks on Bill 2. Now, her remarks: I appreciate the fact that they were very detailed. One of the areas that I was hoping the member could expand upon is what this bill is proposing to do for banked overtime pay and how that will impact workers in her riding but, as well, around the province. I know that this elimination of overtime pay for hours banked will have a significant impact on families. There are many families, especially in the energy sector, who rely on their overtime pay to make ends meet monthly. So I was hoping to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View her thoughts on this proposed change, what it would mean to her constituents and Albertans at large.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for reminding me of that one as well. I had gone so poetic with respect to the rights of youth workers that I had almost forgotten this little piece. I think this is something that's going to make a huge difference in the lives of individuals. A lot of individuals will take overtime because they want to save towards goals, right? If you're working a lower wage job and you're trying to pay your rent and ensure there's food for your kids, it can be quite challenging. That can be a really tight situation.

I know that members of this House, especially on the other side, want to go on about the fact: you know, you worked hard, so you got ahead. As someone who's worked a low-wage job and also as someone who's gone to law school, I'm not denying that law school was difficult, but it's nothing compared to the continual stress of thinking: okay; I have enough to cover all of my bills, and I can put away \$200 a month. You put away and put away and put away, and then your car breaks down, and you're just back to square one again. They're challenging circumstances – they're challenging circumstances – in which to live. I think a lot of people are in those circumstances, and overtime is what makes the difference to them.

You know, certainly, I've heard members on the other side say: well, this isn't that much money. Well, for someone who's living paycheque to paycheque, for someone who's trying to save up so that they can go back to school while still providing for their children, actually it's a lot of money. It's an enormous amount of money. Certainly, when I was back in school, one of my friends had gone back to school a little bit later, too. That's probably why we were friends. Gosh, I think he had his fifth child, actually, while we were in school, so he had a lot of people to provide for. He had a decent job but a job that was a manual labour job, and he often relied on overtime to be able to buy his textbooks. I don't think that that's unreasonable.

This notion of, "Oh, well, you can just choose which to do": it just isn't the case. I've certainly worked for employers who had policies that said that you absolutely must bank your overtime. You were not permitted to have it paid out, specifically to take advantage of a law like this. The employer would essentially force you to work overtime, and then they wouldn't give you the choice as to whether you wanted to take time off. In that particular job, because there were a limited number of us, every time someone

had to take a day off because of this banked overtime, it was actually just harder on everyone else. I mean, really, you didn't get ahead at all.

I think this makes a huge difference for a lot of people, and I think that we in this House need to consider the circumstances of different people, different people across the province who may be from different backgrounds, who may have different circumstances than we do, and we need to consider the fact that this overtime money may mean an enormous amount to them.

I certainly know, for myself and a number of people that I've known over the course of my life, that this is the kind of money that would make an enormous difference. It's the kind of money that you can start to put towards something or just to deal with the fact that your car broke down unexpectedly. I mean, that happens, usually at the worst possible time.

The Speaker: Thank you for your comments, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Good morning to some fresh faces here this morning. It's a pleasure to see you.

We are on debate of RA1. Is there anyone wishing to provide additional debate? I see the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Why, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It is just a joy for me to be here this morning to speak about this issue. I think there is, you know, a lovely sort of – I won't call it irony. There's a different word. I'm kind of having that word-finding problem that exists with people over a certain age. But we're talking about the matter of overtime as we now go into whatever hour that we are now in debating the matter of overtime, so, you know, sweet irony, whatever it is. I'm glad to be here to be able to continue to talk about this issue.

You know, we talked a lot about this issue during the election campaign, but I will say that I think I have to take a certain amount of responsibility that we weren't as successful as I would have liked at really getting folks to understand what these changes would mean to the rights of many working Albertans to earn overtime. As a result of that, perhaps it was not an issue that was sufficiently debated, which, of course, is why we're spending so much time talking about it now, to make sure that everybody truly has the opportunity to think about and to internalize what the consequences of this particular set of changes would be to people's ability to earn overtime. That's, of course, why I'm rising to speak in favour of this amendment, which would in fact serve to delay passage of this bill until such time as we really could unpack what this particular set of amendments would do to people's ability to earn overtime in this province.

We've talked a lot over the last many hours about the nature of Alberta's workforce in terms of people who are, you know, lower wage workers, waged workers, those who are salaried workers, those who are small-business owners, those who are senior managers in larger corporate entities, whether they be private sector or public sector, and then, of course, those who are owners of much, much larger businesses. So we've talked a good deal about the nature of who is doing work in Alberta, and I think it's fair to say that in most cases we all share a very common characteristic, and that is that we all work very, very hard in Alberta. I think that's absolutely true.

I remember moving back here from British Columbia when I was about – let's see. My kids were about, maybe, one and a half and three, Mr. Speaker. I had been working as a lawyer in British Columbia for almost a decade before that and had managed to sort of orchestrate quite a nice little arrangement for myself there, where

I was able to maintain a good professional position with a very good career path, with lots of really interesting working opportunities, while at the same time actually only working part-time so that I could spend time with my children, who were at that time one and three.

8:30 a.m.

It really mattered to me to be able to have these kinds of flexible working arrangements that allowed me to, you know, maintain a foot in the door of my career so that I didn't do the thing that so many women often do, which is that you drop out of the workforce. Then you're struggling to get back into the workforce about 10 years later, and you find that your male colleagues have leapfrogged well past you in terms of your career path, and you're constantly scrambling to catch up. That's, quite frankly, the story that I think many, many experience when they drop completely out of the workforce or, conversely, take jobs with much lower levels of responsibility while caring for young kids. They find that they're starting from behind when they do get back into the workforce once their kids are a bit older.

I was very, very privileged, Mr. Speaker, when I was living in B.C., to have a job that allowed me to do the kinds of interesting things that I could while still working part-time. Indeed, one of the interesting things that I was privileged to be able to do, actually, was to advise the government of B.C. at the time on a range of changes to the health and safety legislation that they had that, interestingly, actually impacted on hours of work and all those kinds of things. It was amazing to be able to have that much agency while still working part-time and raising very young children.

Anyway, the reason I talk about that, as it relates to Alberta, is that when we moved to Alberta, I then set about to find the same kind of work here. You know, the upside was that I was repeatedly offered work by a range of very interesting and exciting employers where I could do the same kinds of fun things, but when I would say, "Great; I want to work part-time, and I still want to have benefits, and I want to have all these things," they looked at me like I was from Mars. They were just: "Well, no. If you're going to do this kind of exciting work, you're going to work 65 hours a week at least, and if you're not, then who are you, and why do you think you get to use your brain and do this job?" It was a bit of a shock to me.

It was an interesting process. It took me about a year to basically – interestingly, I was making fun last night of how it's very hard for individual employees to negotiate their own terms of employment. I suppose I was an exception to that rule because over the course of about a year I managed to negotiate a whole new contract for myself, within a collective agreement setting, to allow not only me but ultimately my future colleagues to work part-time and still do interesting work. But it took some time.

The reason I raise it is that there was an interesting culture that I discovered across all sectors of the Alberta economy because I was, you know, doing a lot of contract work here and there. That's what you want to do. The irony: you want to work part-time, so you take a bunch of part-time contracts and try to build full-time work or enough work, and ultimately you end up working about 1.5 jobs or two jobs while you're juggling all your different contracts. So I worked for a bunch of different people until we managed to finally find that lovely sort of part-time thing that allowed me to go back and spend quality time with my children, which, as you can imagine, was really my number one priority.

Through that process, you know, it became very clear to me: the different culture from B.C. to Alberta; how hard people here work, everybody. You know, the workers worked hard. The paid salaried staff, that I was seeking to be, worked hard. Managers worked hard.

Business owners worked hard. Everybody put in long hours, and the economy was highly productive. In fact, we often found and many people found that there was a shortage of people to fill jobs, in fact, because things were moving so fast at that time. The price of oil was quite high, and the province was also doing well, I think, because of unprecedented land sales and things really doing quite well in the natural gas sector at that point.

Anyway, that's our culture, and that's who we are as Albertans, and I think we should be proud of it. We should. I think it's a good thing. And if people choose to work overtime, then they should absolutely be paid more for it. If we choose to run our businesses and run our organizations and serve our public, if we happen to be in a nonprofit or public-sector setting, with that kind of energy and innovation and devotion, then that's what we should do. But the key is that we should be paid for it. I suspect – and I will admit that I haven't actually looked at it. I haven't had a chance to do a crossjurisdictional comparison because we're still sort of in the process of getting our resources set up over here at the offices of the old off op, so I haven't done as much crossjurisdictional comparison as I would like.

Anyway, we're working through that, but I suspect that it is the case that Albertans probably work more overtime than almost any other province because of that sort of cultural element to our workforce. Again, that's not a bad thing. That creates productivity. That's good. The key is that everyone should enjoy and share the benefits of that culture. Everyone should get the outcome that we are all seeking when we engage in our work life that way, and it shouldn't be a thing where just, you know, a certain group of people get the benefit of it and everybody else carries the burden of it.

Overtime is a concept where there is a premium paid at a certain point for hours that are worked beyond a certain number because it is understood that there are sacrifices that are made by people when they work beyond a certain number of hours in a given day or in a given week or in a given work cycle, however it's defined. There are sacrifices inherent in that choice which go beyond the normal sacrifice that is made when you work under that amount. It has to do with a number of things. It has to do with your health and safety. It has to do with your ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to ensure that you're getting the sleep that you need, that you're getting the right food that you need. [interjections] Exactly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're probably not being your best self – right? – in this 24-hour period. You've probably missed out on all your healthy food, not to mention your morning yoga class, and probably – I don't know. I'm assuming that the Speaker runs a solid 20 K every morning. These things don't happen when, you know, suddenly your work schedule is completely turned on its head and you discover that, no, you have to be in to work much earlier than you'd planned and you need to be at work for 16 hours rather than eight.

In a way, I kind of like that we're having this conversation in this setting because I think there's not a soul in this room that doesn't have some understanding of what it's like to have your schedule and your life disrupted by having to put in a lot more hours of work than you had planned. It's not just the Speaker's yoga class. I think there are many people here that missed out on their morning yoga class. Okay. Maybe not yoga. I'm going to say that this is probably not the profile of most yoga classes, the people in this room. [interjections] Oh, no, no. I stand corrected. Apparently, there is a whole yoga caucus in the UCP government. Namaste.

An Hon. Member: Namaste.

Ms Notley: You know of what I speak, then. It's hard to go through a day without that yoga.

But, seriously, even today we have staff who have worked for more than 14 hours. I'm not sure about our commissionaires and our sheriffs, what's happened with the hours that they've been putting in. I'm not sure whether they would be earning time and a half right now. I hope so. Certainly, I know that the salaried members here are not, but, you know, for some ridiculous reason not only did we sign up for this, but we campaigned and asked lots of people for this, so that's on us. I think that the people that work in and around the vicinity of these buildings: certainly, we need to make sure that they are compensated for the extra hours that they put in.

8:40 a.m.

With all of this, though, the point that I'm trying to make, in a very long-winded and not very articulate way, is that when you say to the person who is paying you, "In return for you paying me, I will give you an hour of my time and effort and attention and capacity and all those things," that bargain changes at a certain point when the length of time that you are delivering to that person reaches past a certain point. We're all human, and it's not actually in people's best interest to consistently work 12, 14 hours a day. The impact on your life outside of work: it's not a linear progression. The impact of that 12th hour away from home is much bigger than the impact of the fifth hour away from home. There. I think I finally found a way to make that case or clarify what it is I'm trying to say.

I say this, going back to my own experience when I was working so hard, as a mom of two small kids, to be able to spend time with them every day. I think there are many people in this room that understand what it's like if your work is such that you go home and you don't actually get to say good night to your kids and you go a whole 24-hour period and you don't see them at all because you've been at work for too long. You can only sustain that so many times before it creates a much bigger, negative impact on your life and on the life of your family. Above and beyond the issue of health and safety, which I think should speak for itself, there's also just the exponential impact on quality of life that arises from working beyond a certain number of hours. As a result of that, there should be a premium paid.

This is not, you know, groundbreaking stuff that I'm saying here. The concept of a premium for overtime work is not quite as old as the hills, but it's been around for some time. In a place like Alberta, where people work hard, play hard, as folks like to say, the concept of a premium for your overtime has been around for a very, very long time, and there are great swaths of our population who have made a tremendous success of their lives that way, whether by way of operating their own businesses and working very, very hard in order to get ahead that way or by way of working as an employee in certain sectors of our population and working very hard that way in order to gain that extra money and also the extra opportunity that can come with it.

Now, I remember at one point hearing someone – I can't remember who it was – try to justify this change to the overtime as somehow providing rights to workers and suggest that the poor waitress was really being held down by the obligation of her employer to pay overtime because she was compelled to be ejected from the workplace at a certain point, right when customers who were getting ready to pay great tips were walking through the door.

Well, I have to say that, I mean, I can only speak from my own experience and from the experience of – oh, I don't know – the 200 or so random waiters and waitresses that have come and talked to me over the course of the last couple of years when I've been out on the road and eating out. In many cases they would come and talk

to me, and they'd sort of whisper, and they'd sort of look around, and they'd say: "You know, thank you so much for everything that you're doing. You're actually making my life so much better. I don't care what my boss says. This is exactly what I need." You know, it's not like I go out begging for people to come and say that to me. Quite the opposite. Typically when my day would end around 9 or 10 o'clock and we would actually go out some place to get a bit of food, we would kind of focus on just sort of winding down at the end of the day, but nonetheless people would often come and volunteer to me their gratitude for this. Even in restaurants that had subsequently gone on the record to rabidly oppose our changes to workplace laws, I would invariably run into the majority of their staff and have them say: yeah, well, the boss may say this, but the other 80 per cent of humans in this business are very grateful for what you've done.

And I will say, you know, that this is not just a theoretical thing. I mean, I've had a long and varied working life, I think it's fair to say. I joke around about how I've done practically every job in this building, but there are a few positions I haven't had yet. Mr. Speaker, just don't feel threatened or anything, also those at the table and the Sergeant-at-Arms. That's always struck me, that the uniforms are really cool. Lots of options.

I've had a fairly wide-ranging group of jobs over my time working since I first started working at the age of 15. In fact, my first job that actually lasted more than a few days was as a waitress when I was 15. In fact, that is the work that I did until I was about 21, 22. I worked at a number of different types of restaurants during that time, and I will say without question that I think that some of the hardest work that anyone will ever do in their life is work in the service industry, in the food services industry. I think it's incredibly hard work. I'll acknowledge that I was not the best waitress on the planet. Looking back, I marvel that I actually managed to maintain my job given the number of times I would flip a tray accidentally onto the laps of poor customers. This was not my forte. Nonetheless, I somehow managed to stay employed through that whole process. Maybe that's partially why I wasn't as successful with the tips as some, but nonetheless I did that all through high school.

Interestingly, you know, I started at the very beginning of grade 10, when I was 15, before I had a car or before I could drive. We lived about 25 clicks out of town, so my mom had to drive me into town for my shift and then come and pick me up when I was finished. Often I'd be working until about midnight, and I'd be working 10, 11, 12 hours on weekends and would definitely be working till 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning on weeknights when I was going to school. Once I got my driver's licence, that made things a little bit easier.

Certainly, the fact that I was 15 or 16 had no impact on the type of work that I was doing. I was, you know, working at exactly the same kind of job as the other waitresses, serving people food and all that kind of thing. Until I was 18, I couldn't serve liquor, but that had absolutely no impact on the number of customers that I would serve, the number of orders I would put through, the amount of dishes I would wash, the amount of salads that I would make, all that kind of stuff. I was fully a part of the team at all of the restaurants where I worked, beginning at the age of 15.

Certainly, you know, that tradition continues in my family. My son is washing dishes while working on his science degree at the U of A, and he'll also come home at about 2 o'clock in the morning and then go off to school the next day. Interestingly for him, standing and washing dishes, you know, if he actually has to work two shifts in a row, back to back, and if his shifts go more than about eight hours, his feet get so bad from standing that he's

literally limping when he gets home. He limps up the stairs, and he limps for the next day.

8:50 a.m.

He's trying now to make sure that his shifts aren't scheduled back to back. He can't control when he ends up having to work a really, really long shift because customers come in at the very last minute, right before the restaurant is going to close, so he has to stick around. Then if he has to stand on his feet for 11 or 12 hours, he literally cannot walk, and he limps around. If you question this, ask anyone in our neighbourhood who watches him the next morning limping around while walking our dog. I have to explain what's going on with his feet to the neighbours.

Ms Hoffman: But with enough overtime maybe he can get orthotics.

Ms Notley: Well, if he gets paid the premium, yeah, he can get some orthotics, which is a whole other issue.

Anyway, this is real. What I will say is that in that experience it was never the case that, you know, you were wishing: jeez, I just wish I could get paid straight time so that I could stay that 12th hour at the workplace and get all those extra tips. The idea that that's what's happening in the world of people who are working in restaurants is nonsense, Mr. Speaker. It's just nonsense.

You know, I also had the experience a little bit later, when I was about – what was I? – I guess 19, of working at a restaurant that was isolated. It was on the north shore of Great Bear Lake. You had to fly in and fly out. We had very wealthy tourists from the U.S. fly in. They would stay for a week, and they would go fishing on Great Bear Lake in search of the biggest lake trout ever. At the time the lodge that I worked for actually held the record for the biggest lake trout ever caught. It was about 65 pounds. It was quite impressive. But that was not the job I had. I didn't get to be the guide that took the guests out fishing on the lake. I was one of the four waitresses that served them breakfast and supper.

It was very interesting. I still remember flying into the camp about a week before the guests were to arrive, and our job was to get the camp ready for the first guests. We flew in. We had to do two flights. We probably landed around 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening. We all got to work, and we just kept working and working and working. At a certain point I thought: "Gosh, you know, I'm really hungry. Why am I so hungry? It's, like, only 10 o'clock. I'm not usually hungry." Lo and behold, it was 5 o'clock in the morning, and the sun hadn't gone down because it was, you know, the last week of June or whatever it was. They just had us working until 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, until we basically dropped off our feet from working so hard to get the camp ready.

Of course, we lived there. We couldn't leave. If we chose to leave before the camp was scheduled to close after two and a half months, we would have had to pay about two weeks' salary for the cost of the plane to get out, so we were sort of captured. We lived in this little, harshly plumbed cabin outside the lodge, and we generally worked about 12 hours a day, six and a half days a week. Interestingly, this was a long time ago – you know, I'm not that young – and the laws were different, so they could do that. In hindsight, I mean, we were genuinely sort of captured employees.

When I think back to the hours that we worked, it is quite something to me that we didn't get overtime. I will however say that if I'd been offered it, I would have taken it, and I will also say that under no circumstances was I given the opportunity to negotiate the terms and conditions of that employment. It was a great experience, but it was probably in violation of just a plethora of rules. I'm not saying that they were in violation then. I'm just

saying that the rules that we have in place now would have required a very different set of working conditions than what we had, and I think that that is a good thing because when I think back to the situations we were put into, I don't think that they were particularly great for us at the time.

It's these kinds of things that we need to guard against as Albertans as we continue to do the thing that we do, where we all work very, very, very hard and we produce more and we have higher levels of productivity in the province of Alberta than any other part of the country. Even in the midst of this downturn we still have the highest earnings in the country, we still have the highest number of people working, the highest percentage of labour force participation in the country, and people earning the most. I think that that is because, in part, of this culture that we all have of working hard and working long.

I do not believe that we are going to encourage that or reward that fairly if we say: well, the folks that are employing these people that are working hard and working long will enjoy the benefit of their work and enjoy the benefit of those profits and that productivity, and what we're going to do is reach in and grab some of the benefits that should be going to all of us, and we're going to steal them out of their pockets and put them in someone else's pockets, and we're going to do this on the backs of those who have the least agency and the least ability to defend themselves.

It just really does go against the grain with respect to, you know, when you have to make changes, when you come up against challenges, when you have to shift the way you're doing things. I think that there's an element of that, for sure, in this province because we know that as much as everybody likes to make the sort of simplistic arguments – and I believe that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford did a beautiful job last night of revealing their shortcomings – as much as people like to say, “You got elected; the price of oil dropped; therefore, all the things that happened as a result of the price of oil dropping are now your fault,” I think most people understand that that is not true.

I think, more to the point, people understand that our energy industry is going through a major, major restructuring, a major shift and that even when – and I say “when” with great optimism and hope – we get the matter of our ability to get our products to market resolved and we establish greater takeaway capacity in the longer term through pipelines and, hopefully, in the medium term through the wise reversal of this government's plan to cancel crude by rail, even when we get our takeaway capacity issues resolved, the nature and the structure of the energy industry are changing in a way that our economy also is going to have to change. What people do to earn money is also in the state of probably unprecedented change and evolution right now.

The key as we go through that is that we go through it together and that we make sure that everybody is doing their fair share to get through what is an economic shift and that we don't use the economic shift as an opportunity to suddenly rip away the framework that ensures that all Albertans can share in either prosperity or challenge together, the way we should. We should not build our economic future on the back of a principle of exploitation. Our economic future should be built on the foundation of people coming together to share both the upside and the downside, to share the upside and to share the risk, not putting the risk on the backs of those who can least afford it and shovelling the upside to a group of people who already, in many cases, are doing very, very well, blindly hoping that by moving all the upside to them, they will choose to invest more here.

9:00 a.m.

Honestly, as we heard when we had some of the conversation that we've been having around Bill 3, there's mounting evidence that that's just not the way it works. I do look forward as well to getting back to that conversation around Bill 3 because every time I turn around, more people are finding more really thoughtful, thoughtful studies, evidence, historical analysis, case study after case study after case study showing the likely failure and the missteps of this government as it relates to the corporate tax strategy as a means of creating long-term economic prosperity and sustainability in the province of Alberta. Anyway, that's Bill 3.

This is another piece to that. As I've said before, it's all about finding ways to maximize gifts to certain players within our economy with no guaranteed benefit in return but a clear guaranteed loss to other people in the economy. Workers will get less. That's just what it means. When you pay people at straight time for overtime instead of time and a half for overtime, it's very clear. It's black and white: workers will get less.

Ms Hoffman: How does that stimulate the economy?

Ms Notley: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora asks, “How does that stimulate the economy?” We've talked before. It's not helpful. You know, when you talk about small business – and members opposite are very passionate about talking about small business, and that's great. Small business is the backbone of our economy. I'm going to be doing an event later this morning with a number of wonderful small-business owners who contribute to the economy, who contribute to our community, who are dear friends. It is absolutely true that small business is the backbone of our economy. No question about that.

Now, I think I've lost my train. I started talking about small business. Where was I going there?

Ms Hoffman: Cutting straight time. Cutting overtime. Less money in the local economy.

Ms Notley: Oh, that's it. Yes, small business. Thank you. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Just guessing.

Ms Notley: One of the things about small business, though, that sometimes gets lost when the other side is talking about small business, is that small business actually, for the most part, requires money to be spent in their small business in Alberta by people who are here in Alberta. The reason small business is the backbone of our economy is that they're part of an internal and localized economic model that requires there to be money flowing within the local economic model. If you take money out of the local economic model, then there is less money to flow within it, and then small business doesn't do as well.

Basically, if you run a small business, you need the folks in your community that you rely on to use your small business to have the money to spend on your small business. If the folks in your community, if your neighbours find that they have \$2,500 a month less in their family budget every 12 weeks, then guess what? They are not going to maybe feel that they can buy a new vehicle. They're not going to go to get their hair done. They're not going to go to one of these restaurants where all these theoretical happy waiters and waitresses are so pleased to be able to work long hours with no overtime so that you can get the tip that apparently they're not going to get now because everybody has less money. Anyway, they're not going to go there. They're not going to avail themselves of the small-business services as much as they would otherwise because

they have less money. That's the thing about an economy that is built on the hard work of small-business owners: they are more susceptible to the loss of money in the economy.

We know, for sure, that many small businesses have also suffered as a result of the drop in the price of oil. You know, as drilling has gone down, as production has gone down, as employment within the oil and gas sector has gone down, a series of these rippling effects goes through the economy in many, many, many ways. We know that that is true. Many of these small businesses suffer. There's no question. I wish that there were ways to protect them more effectively, but that has already happened. But what we also know is that to then, you know, fire a bunch of public-sector workers, to roll back wages, to stop paying people overtime, and to take money out of people's pockets – in fact, the negative impact on small businesses will ripple even further, and the ripple will be stronger, and it will go farther. Austerity is rarely a path to economic growth. [interjections] Right. Oh, that's a good one. We certainly, certainly do not want to starve or strangle economic growth.

You know, when our government was first elected, we actually went off and sought advice. It's a thing that we did. We were very committed to sort of evidence-based decision-making. We sought advice from former governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge. He talked to us about how to stimulate economic growth in the midst of the downturn that we were faced with. He talked, of course, about injecting quite a significant bump in investment into infrastructure to keep people employed and to keep that money circulating in the economy and all that kind of stuff. So we did that.

Just to be clear, I don't think there's a person in the room that would ever characterize David Dodge as some socialist lefty. I'm pretty sure David Dodge would not characterize David Dodge as a socialist lefty. He's just a guy who happens to believe in, you know, Keynesian economics. It's a long-time economic theory, and it's one that appears to have stood the test of time. For instance, where Keynesian economics are used, you tend to see economic growth. Where you see Reaganomics introduced, you tend to see economic . . .

Ms Hoffman: Contraction.

Ms Notley: . . . contraction. That's what history delivers to us, a picture of how these things work over time.

In any event, the rationale there for Mr. Dodge's recommendations was this idea that we need to keep money in the economy. This goes right back to this idea of making sure that folks can stay working and that their money can stay in the economy and continue to keep the economy working, and that is why things like telling people that they don't get to earn overtime anymore stymies the very plan and objectives that someone like David Dodge was talking to our government about pursuing.

You know, another reason why overtime is something that should be paid at a premium is because there are additional costs to working extra hours above and beyond. I've talked about the health and safety issues. I've talked about the consequences to lifestyle, but I forgot to talk about some of the costs. And it just occurred to me because, of course, I believe there are a few members of our caucus who just in the last 24 hours have incurred additional costs as a result of us staying later. Of course, it's a rare occurrence for us. We're fine. We all signed up for this. But for regular working people it's a much, much more difficult thing to manage. When you end up having to work overtime, what do you do? You have to pay for child care. When you're paying for child care that is unpredictable – so that person has to be on call to come in or to stay

late to provide additional child care – that is outside of the regular hours that a person would normally work, guess what? That child care costs more. That child care comes at a premium, so presumably you should also be earning a premium in order to pay for that child care, which is now at a premium.

9:10 a.m.

Now, members opposite may or may not know that with the child care pilots that we introduced over the course of the last four years, one of the pilots, not one individual one but one of the things that we were piloting, was the cost and the ability for agencies to develop shift-based child care so that we could actually have high-quality, affordable, accessible child care centres with well-educated child care providers and properly designed early education programs on a shift basis so that kids were not disrupted so much when parents had to work shifts and because we have large sectors of our economy where women, in particular, will do shift work, yet they can't find child care that accommodates that. So we were looking at trying to, you know, find public-sector placements for these kinds of child care arrangements.

I was thinking in particular, of course, about, for instance, in health care. We know that many, many nurses work on 12-hour schedules, and they're expected to work overtime. Now, because they have a collective agreement, of course, they get a premium for working overtime. That's, again, the good thing about a union, which this bill is trying to discourage. Thankfully, the nurses do have a union, so they do have written into their contract that they get a premium when they have to work overtime. What they don't have is particularly high levels of predictability around when they work overtime. In theory, they have schedules, and in theory they're supposed to get two weeks' notice of their schedule, or maybe it's three weeks. I can't remember the contract offhand now. But in emergent or difficult circumstances the employer, that being the people of Alberta indirectly, can break those schedules and break those plans, and all they have to do is pay an additional premium if they do it.

I can tell you from my own personal work experience that at that point, really, the premium is not even what folks are looking for. All they really want is control over their life, and they're deeply frustrated when they are suddenly told that they don't have that. Nonetheless, it was through this experience of working with this particular workforce and understanding how difficult it is when you are employed in a job where you have a 24-hour work cycle and you only have limited control over when you work and when you don't work and overtime is a matter of course – how do we construct child care that supports those working people so that the kids can still receive good, high-quality child care while mom or dad is working shift work and working these long hours? What I think we've heard from the preliminary pilot reports, although members opposite probably have better access to that information than I do right now, is that it costs more to provide that kind of child care. It would then flow that that is why when you work overtime, you should also be paid a premium because it costs more to work overtime and to do your job.

Just that issue of child care is a perfect example of why this sort of arbitrary decision embedded in this bill to pick the pockets of these workers and pull back their overtime is so hard nosed and unfair, just simply unfair.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it really does just come down to this issue of fairness, and I think all of us were raised very early on with this idea of fairness, but we have different views of what fairness is. Obviously, our view of what fairness is is driven by our own experience. There's no question. I know there are lots of folks who run businesses who will say: "I worked so, so hard. I worked 70

hours. Things didn't go our way, and my business is struggling. It is not fair that it should struggle more because I have to pay my employees this wage which they believe is fair. But it's not fair anymore because I'm not earning as much money as I would've liked." I appreciate that's an absolutely legitimate perspective. Our vision of what is fair is driven by our own experience. There's no question.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

But I think that overall, if you're going to define what is fair, what you need to do is look at who has decision-making authority and who generally does better and who generally has less decision-making, less agency, and who generally earns less. Fairness should be about providing some balance, not growing the imbalance between those two different groups of people, and this bill at its heart is about finding different ways to grow the imbalance between people in our workforces and in our economy.

That is why, again, this idea of stripping overtime from working people strikes me as just fundamentally unfair. As it is, we're stripping overtime from people to the tune of \$2,500 every 12 weeks if you're one of the 400,000 people who work overtime, just to give you a bit of a sense of it. We're not making this number up. It's not a Rebel media site over here, okay? We actually did some research here, and we just went to the government of Alberta statistics and looked at: what is the average number of overtime hours worked by people who work overtime, and what is their average rate of pay? Then we looked at: what do they lose, then, if they go from time and a half to straight time? That is basically how we came up with this number of roughly \$2,500 every 12 weeks. It's not rocket science.

Now, I will grant you, the numbers are a little bit – you know, it's a bit rough because what we do know is that those statistics around the number of people who work overtime and their average rate of pay includes unionized workers. We do know that this attack on overtime in Bill 2 won't apply to unionized workers. I mean, it will apply to some unionized workers because in some cases the union will have not bothered to negotiate this issue because they have perceived that it was already protected in employment standards, so not every unionized worker will be protected from the negative consequences of this pick-your-pockets bill, but some of them will be. When you look at the tools we used to come up with this number of \$2,500 every 12 weeks, we do need to allow for the fact that those estimates are skewed a little bit by those folks who have union jobs, who will actually be protected from this pick-your-pocket legislation by virtue of their union contract. So I will acknowledge that.

That's the one place where our numbers are a little bit rough because we can't find the information about how to factor out those particular employees from the 400,000. But because we know that, generally speaking, union density in Alberta is quite low – it's only around about 20 per cent – and because we know that not every union worker will be protected from this pick-your-pockets bill because of the fact that, again, those people negotiating their contract were relying on the existence of generalized employment standards legislation and didn't want to burn negotiating capital by bargaining things that were already protected in basic legislation.

9:20 a.m.

Just so you know, when people go: "Oh, I don't know what you're talking about. What are they talking about with this \$2,500?" That's how we did it. It's a pretty simple calculation, folks. You can get your own staff to do it. Obviously, it's an up to, because it's an average number of hours. Some people will actually lose more than \$2,500, and some people will lose less. Not every employer will

convert all overtime to this banked overtime at straight time model. Some employers will just say: well, this is garbage. Many employers, I hope, actually, will say: "This is garbage. Why would I exploit or double-cross my employees? I already have a perfectly fine arrangement with them. My business model works on it. I understand the principle of overtime. I used to be a working person getting paid overtime at time and a half. I think it's the right thing to do, and I'm not going to take advantage of this loophole that this UCP government is inviting me to use." Obviously, not every employer will take advantage of this loophole. Not every employer will take advantage fully of this loophole. They might only take advantage of it partly. Again, that has to be factored into it.

But know this: there are over 400,000 Albertans who get overtime. This piece of legislation would facilitate up to an average of \$2,500 every 12 weeks being taken from the pockets of working Albertans. That is what you are allowing or permitting to have happen to hard-working Albertans through the passage of this bill. You are inviting employers to take \$2,500 every 12 weeks out of the pockets of working Albertans. That's pretty big. That's pretty big.

I know, as I've said before, there are many, many, many employers who will not do this. They will have entered into collective agreements that, frankly, pay better than time and a half. They will have respect for the relationships that they have with the hard-working people who are part of their business, and they will not take advantage of this. They will understand that the success of their business – small business, medium-sized business, large business – depends on the strong working partnership that they have with their employees. I know that there are many, many, many Alberta employers who will say just that.

But I also know that this government obviously was lobbied by some employers to give them this loophole so that they can drive through this loophole and take that \$2,500 on average from each of their employees every 12 weeks. I don't know exactly who those employers are. I anticipate getting the report soon about who donated to what PACs and all that kind of stuff. That information is going to start coming out pretty soon, and it's going to be good fun to go through it and figure out who got what as a result of the PAC donation sweepstakes. Right now we don't know who that is, but what we do know is that there is a very strong – well, as I say, it's permissive, but it really reads like an invitation. We call it the Act to Pick Your Pockets. It's clearly an invitation to pick the pockets of working people to the tune of \$2,500 every 12 weeks.

Yeah. It's a lot of money. It's a lot – a lot – of money. Back when I was talking about my time working as a waitress on the north shore of Great Bear Lake, I will tell you that \$2,500 is pretty much how much I made the whole two months of working 12 hours a day, six and a half days a week. So it seems like a lot of money to me. Now, I realize I'm not as young as everybody here, but it does still seem like – I think that's a lot of money even in today's dollars, that \$2,500 in 12 weeks, in three months. I think it will matter a lot.

I think it will impact people's ability to get child care. I think it will impact people's ability to buy local in terms of the kinds of things that people like to do with disposable income, you know, travelling around the province and supporting Alberta businesses in the summer through tourism, enjoying the benefits of small businesses in their communities, whether it's by way of, as I've said before, going to restaurants, those kinds of things, or going to their local hardware store and buying things that allow them to do home improvement. I know a lot of people do home improvement on a recreational basis. I wish one of those people were in my family, but they're not. I know that people do recreationally home improve, and that is a thing that actually drives the economy quite significantly.

In my case back in the day, when I had time, I would recreationally home improve, but I did it so badly that I spent three times as much as I should have because I would decide to do a project, do it wrong, and then have to go back and buy stuff to try it again. Typically by the third time I had managed to cobble together the most MacGyvered of not very successful home improvement projects, but in so doing, I was generating a lot of economic activity and GDP growth for folks in the home improvement sector.

Anyway, that's just me. I think other people are more efficient about that particular expenditure, but nonetheless that's the kind of thing that will go by the wayside when people find \$2,500 less in their pocket every three months. And that's the kind of thing that will hurt local economies. Perhaps the multiplier effect won't be quite as large as it is when it's me spending that money, but it will still be, you know, relatively noticeable for folks.

Yeah. Those are our reasons why, of course, this bill, again, does not actually open Alberta for business. What it does is it threatens to close Alberta businesses while picking the pockets of hard-working Albertans who I think deserve to be rewarded at a premium for being part of a province that has and does work historically very, very hard and produces great amounts of things for the economy and that leads the country in terms of economic activity. Let's see. How are we doing? What time did I start talking? It must be getting close there. Anyhoo.

I think that for all these reasons, I would urge members of this House to give sober second thought to moving forward immediately on this pick-your-pocket labour bill. I think that, as I've said a few times, we all share the desire to grow our economy and to create jobs. I don't think it's just folks over here who are a little bit taken aback by the logic that we create jobs by paying people less. I honestly think that there must be some folks on that side of the House who are giving their head a little bit of a shake to this idea that job creation is a thing that happens when you roll back the wages of people and pay them less and that that as an economic strategy is, in fact, a fundamentally flawed economic strategy.

If you look at the successful economies around the world that emulate or include the characteristics that we in the province of Alberta, I assume, will always want to preserve, which are the characteristics of human rights recognition and respect, free speech, democratic rights, you know, the right to health care when you need it, the right to publicly funded and accessible education, the right to a certain quality of life, the right to safety in your community, all these things, we believe, are fundamental tenets of the communities within which we live, not only here in Alberta but across the country.

9:30 a.m.

When that's your starting point, then, of course, that should disqualify a number of economies in the world from us pursuing them or wanting to emulate them. I think our starting point should always be those characteristics, those qualities, and if you start with those criteria, what we are looking at, then, is trying to emulate economies that are sophisticated, innovative, diversified, leading-edge, high-tech, premised on high education, premised on equitable workforce participation, premised on strong social supports that allow all people to participate to their maximum ability within the workforce, those kinds of economies. That is the kind of economy we should be seeking to build in the province of Alberta, not an economy that is trying to compete with another economy that rejects some of those basic characteristics that I began by outlining, those characteristics of respect for human rights, those characteristics of access to health care when you need it, those

characteristics of equal access to high-quality education on a public basis.

Those characteristics: if that's your starting point, then the economies that folks here seem to think we are competing with are not the economies that we're competing with. Or if we are, we're not going to be successful because, you know, they'll always be able to breach more rights than even the members in this House are prepared to breach. So it will not be a successful race to the bottom. They will always go lower faster than us. Why we would embark upon that race I don't know. I said last night that what we should be doing is mapping out a race to the top, not a race to the bottom. Bill 2 is about mapping out a race to the bottom.

You know, I notice we've had some students come in to watch the debate, and I just want to give them a bit of a wave there. Oh, they're all waving. That's really good. They look like they're around – I can't tell.

Ms Hoffman: Grade 6.

Ms Notley: Oh. Grade 6.

Ms Hoffman: That's my guess.

Ms Notley: I'd say maybe grade 6. That makes sense.

They're a couple of years away from getting that first job, but, boy, oh boy, I bet you – I mean, I'm certain we can't do audience participation because I know that's not appropriate for the House. But I'd love to do a poll of those students up there and ask them about when they start their first job and start working for eight or nine hours a day, potentially two years from now. As I said, I was 15 when I started working up to 12-hour shifts waiting on tables. I'm wondering if they think that they should be paid the same as the other people that they would be working with or whether they should be paid less because of how old they are. I want you to know that I think you should be paid the same amount for the work that you do, and it's unfortunate that some people don't agree with that, because I think that's unfair.

Anyway, it is hard to say because they cannot engage in this, so we will just all make guesses about where they all are. Maybe when you leave, you guys can have a conversation about this in your class, about what you think about fair wages for people who are under 18, not to in any way disrupt the current lesson plan. If there was something else planned, I apologize to those who had a different lesson plan. I can see my teacher friends starting to text me, telling me to stop doing that kind of stuff. Anyway, welcome to the Assembly, all of those kids up there.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Anyway, for all these reasons, as I've said before, we urge members opposite to delay on this bill, to reconsider it, to not read it a second time, to go back to the drawing board, to learn what the legislation itself says, to better inform themselves on the impact of the legislation so that they can understand fully that, in fact, this is a very aggressive grab at overtime for working people, that there is no voluntary nature to it, that there is no ability of working people to say yea or nay to whether or not they have their premium for overtime taken away from them, that any interpretation of the legislation that suggests that somehow people have a say in this in any meaningful way is an incorrect interpretation.

Both legal opinion and experience prove that to be the case. That is why we changed it in the first place, and that, of course, is why so many friends and insiders have lobbied for it to be changed back, and that is why it is being changed back. At the very least, I would urge members opposite that if they do proceed to move ahead with

this bill, they be very strong and clear and acknowledge that what they are doing is passing a bill that will invite up to 400,000 employees in Alberta to receive overtime at straight time rather than at time and a half and that this is an intentional decision that folks here have made and to then at least be willing to be accountable for that decision to working people and their families and their employers and everybody else in this province that that is what is happening.

I think that when we embark upon these sorts of risky, race-to-the-bottom, back-to-the-future, 1980s Reaganomics-style economic plans, it is, of course, divisive because it's about growing inequality, not reducing it. It is polarizing. At the very least, I would hope that those who advocate for this kind of divisive, polarizing, equity-reducing strategy will in fact stand up and be accountable for it and acknowledge the consequences of the legislation and the consequences of the amendments that are being proposed here today; that is, that this is a full-frontal attack on the overtime of working people.

With that, I believe that I am going to end my comments because I have some other things that I have to do today. As much as I love talking here endlessly, there probably are other things people would like to see me do as well.

With that, I urge people to support our amendment, and I thank you for the opportunity to address the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments if anyone would like to raise one. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I enjoyed every word, every minute of our leader's speech to this amendment. You know, one of the things that I wish she had the time to do is to go back and repeat the comments that she made before the class came in, because I think that, unfortunately, the class in the gallery missed what was probably the best part of the speech. Unfortunately, 29(2)(a) doesn't give us enough time to allow her to make those comments again, but I would encourage the class members here in the gallery to go back to *Hansard*, when it becomes available, and read it thoroughly because it will be the most valuable education that they'll get on the topic of labour and employment standards for a while.

9:40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, it was with great interest that I listened to the member's experiences working at Great Bear Lake. She referenced a number of times in her speech the fact that she is not the youngest member in this House. It must have been fascinating to have worked in the Northwest Territories so shortly after the glaciers had receded from that part of Canada. I mean, I am pleased, really, that she managed to survive all of the mammoth attacks and the sabre-toothed tiger patrols that I'm sure she saw in those early times in the Northwest Territories, which just speaks to her tenacity, I guess, and unwillingness to bend in the face of significant, intimidating physical force. It's just really remarkable to think that so much has changed.

Of course, you know, we can expect that the area of the Northwest Territories is going to change even more significantly and at a much faster rate because the members opposite are so keen to not do anything on climate change. At least, we have one member with living history here who can tell us how much the north of Canada has changed because of the effects of human-induced climate change. Perhaps she can take a holiday at some point – I imagine we won't be legislating forever, Mr. Speaker, although I

couldn't imagine what other things we could possibly do that would be better with our time – and perhaps she could go back to the shores of Great Bear Lake in the near future and tell us how much it has changed in the time since she was there. It's important, I think, to collect those personal stories about climate change and the impact on Canada's north. It's important oral history that we wouldn't get otherwise.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I can't recall if she touched on it before the class entered or not, but I think she mentioned in her speech something about the unfairness of paying students a wage that is \$2 an hour less than people who are 18 years old. What the members opposite are doing is encouraging these young students to drop out of school early to make more money, which I'm sure is not what their parents want them to do, certainly not what their teachers want them to do. It's probably what the Minister of Education wants them to do; it'll save them money down the road. It's probably what the Finance minister wants them to do so that they can, you know, continue to shovel giant cheques into the backyards of the wealthiest in the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think the children there in the gallery wouldn't agree that these are the proper incentives that we need to provide our young people for education in this province. Certainly, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in her speech did talk about the value of education and promoting education, and I would encourage anyone listening to this debate who is thinking about postsecondary education or going back to high school to upgrade to do so because that is really the path to a prosperous future. You know, unfortunately, all that we have to do is to do those kinds of public encouragements for people to create incentives for education, because this government has taken away a financial incentive for public education.

With that, I will close my remarks.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. member.

I would obviously caution anyone that may be making remarks that might be perceived as a personal attack. You might govern yourself accordingly in the future.

Are there any others? We are on amendment RA1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to talk on the amendment to Bill 2, moved by the member, that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House that further input is absolutely necessary from the public. We on this side have been standing up for hard-working Albertans. We made sure that Albertans had modern workplace laws that respected working people, set modern standards, and ensured that Albertans were treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, after decades of inaction hard-working Albertans finally had the same rights and benefits as every other Canadian. We followed through on our promise to phase in a \$15 minimum wage so that people didn't have to go from their jobs to the food bank. We made workplaces more family friendly. We introduced job-protecting leaves, improved maternity leave and compassionate care standards.

Mr. Speaker, we put a lot of time and effort into studying the impacts of the minimum wage. Unfortunately, Bill 2 at this point

doesn't seem to have a lot of that studying and information to move forward. We know the work that we did on this side of the House put more dollars in the pockets of hard-working Albertans who live, work, and spend their money here. We pored over studies finding positive effects of raising minimum wage, like increased consumer spending, lower wage inequality, better health outcomes, with little negative impact on overall employment levels.

The government in the information that they've provided, I'm hoping that they had looked at the impact of this legislation on women, on consumer spending, on health, on poverty and so much more. I think that more information is needed to determine this before we move forward with Bill 2 because we know that most of the people, unfortunately, that are impacted by poverty and lower incomes and lack of correctly paid out overtime are women and women that are raising children. We know that families in this situation have higher rates of illness, limited housing availability, limited affordable child care abilities, Mr. Speaker, and the list just goes on.

I'd like to take a little bit of time here to talk about this youth, student wage differential. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we believe that Albertans, young or old, deserve equal pay for equal work. Rolling back the minimum wage for young people demonstrates a lack of compassion and a lack of respect for young workers. The value of your work should depend on the effort and the skill that you put into it, not what year you were born.

If you would just indulge me a little bit, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just talk a little bit about young parents and share a story if I will. A 14-year-old girl is living at home. It's, unfortunately, not a great place to be for her. In order for her to be successful in her education, she moves in with a friend and their family, but unfortunately, financially this young person had to continue with their education as well as get their first job. For many, a first job is an exciting time, as it was for this 14-year-old, being able to purchase things that perhaps parents would have done but weren't able to because she was now living on her own. So 14 years old, working on her own, working minimum wage, going to school. This young person worked over the summer. They were able to save up a little money while contributing to the family that they stayed with and were able to purchase, you know, back-to-school clothes so that on their first day of grade 10 they could fit in with their new peer group.

School goes on. The job kind of stops. They're in a more stable living situation, and the second home that this child is living in is not stable either. Unfortunately, there's domestic violence. There are addictions. This child is struggling at school, and this child decides that perhaps a job would allow a little bit of an escape if you will, Mr. Speaker, from some of the things that are going on at home and also to provide some stable income to this child so that they can continue to have some school supplies, the basics, really, in order to further their education.

So this student now going into grade 12 finds that they have an unplanned pregnancy. This student is 16 years old, not living in the best of situations, now is facing an unplanned pregnancy. That part-time work now becomes: what do I do with my future, and where do I put that money? Going to school, struggling at home, unplanned pregnancy, and working part-time. The situation at this young girl's home didn't improve, so she moved out again but this time on her own, so that part-time employment meant paying for bills, transportation, food, and preparing for a new baby that was coming. Still in school . . .

9:50 a.m.

Ms Hoffman: Still 16.

Ms Goehring: . . . still 16, struggling with all of the things that come with being a young parent, this 16-year-old decides that they

need more supports, so they start talking to the school counsellors. They're dealing with school, they're dealing with education, and they're dealing with growing a tiny human and how to just really get ahead in life at 16 years old, Mr. Speaker. This isn't an uncommon story. This is happening all across the world, and we're in a province right now that's looking at rolling back minimum wage for young people if they're still in school. Had this 16-year-old been dealing with this legislation, I would suggest that perhaps this young 16-year-old would maybe have dropped out of school, which would be absolutely detrimental for their future and their child's future.

Back to the 16-year-old: this young woman was in a school that also had about four or five other young parents that were also dealing with an unplanned pregnancy, Mr. Speaker. What this young woman did was that she went to her school counsellor and was able to create some sort of support group within the school because she knew that she needed support to be able to stay in school and work, and she wanted to offer that support to her peers who were also dealing with an unplanned pregnancy at 16 years old in high school.

This group came together, and they strategized about ways that they could support each other while working and going to school. In the time that they had at the school, they were able to bring in some nurses to talk about pregnancy and just being healthy as a mom. They were able to talk about the future and what that meant and how they could get through school and be successful in that, Mr. Speaker. So we move into the second semester of grade 12, and this young person is still working. She's still going to school, but unfortunately, because the baby was due in mid-spring, she dropped out of school, was now living in financial hardship, raising baby, trying to make sure that baby was taken care of, and then her home life was also not very stable. She was living in a home situation that wasn't healthy, that wasn't a best-case scenario. Again, this young person, working, tried to figure out the best way that she could move forward.

There's an organization called Terra, and it's in Edmonton, and it's an organization that works to support young parenting and pregnant teens. This young person reached out to this organization and said: "You know what? I want to stay in school. I want to be able to complete my grade 12 and create a future for my child." They were struggling, Mr. Speaker. This organization, Terra, was able to bring them back into school, into grade 12, and find extra supports for them to be able to continue with their education, to graduate high school. Now, this program, I have to say, is absolutely incredible. It supports young people, moms and dads, who are struggling with pregnancy, trying to make decisions on how to proceed with that pregnancy, and supporting young people where they're at to try and make them successful.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, youth that are dealing with an unplanned pregnancy have a higher rate of school dropout. They often don't continue with their education. They are in a situation where they need to take care of their family, their baby, and they end up working. So this is a situation that we're forcing. We're making it that much more difficult for young people to stay in school and to continue working if we're looking at not having a fair wage for these young people.

This student, with supports, was able to graduate high school and to go on and work in Alberta and was able to get accepted into college, but part of that was the need to continue to work. Mr. Speaker, when a young person is going to school and trying to raise a family as well as get a postsecondary education, the employment options are limited. So this young person went into the service industry and was working as a waitress as well as a bartender, working as much as possible to try and make sure that ends were met for their young child, to afford daycare, tuition, all of those things that are so important in order to get ahead. This young person worked all through college bartending, waitressing, doing whatever

they could to make sure that they were able to provide a better future for not just themselves as a young person but for their young child, who was also depending on them.

As a single mom this was really difficult, and there were times that, I'm sure, the server went home with not a lot of tips. It could have been a slow night. It was a university-type establishment, and the people that were coming into the establishment were students and really didn't have a lot of money. Tips weren't always that reliable. You know, it may have meant buying a pack of diapers and some baby food and maybe more than tuna that night for the mom to eat. Parents make sacrifices all the time when it comes to raising children. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this mom made sure that her child was always a priority. Struggling with tip money, education, long nights: it was difficult. Just being committed to working and getting through to the end of that postsecondary was essential.

When we look at the proposed legislation here and the recommendations that they're making with that service wage differential, it's not okay, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is the same type of demographic that is mostly women, perhaps young moms, perhaps moms with several children, trying to do their best to get by.

Now, if you look at a server that might work a morning shift, Mr. Speaker, they're up super early. They're serving breakfast. We know that breakfast is probably one of the least expensive meals to have when you're out.

Ms Hoffman: And one of the toughest to serve.

Ms Goehring: One of the toughest to serve. Absolutely. It's tough and unfortunately probably not a big expense when it comes to their bill, so probably not a high tip. You're working hard, you're working early in the morning, you're struggling, and you're probably not making a lot of tips. Now, if you look at a server who perhaps is working at a nightclub in Calgary or Edmonton, their take-home for tips might be absolutely extraordinary. They might make a really good living on a weekend. But let's say that you're working somewhere in rural Alberta. Not a lot of people coming through your restaurant, and your tips aren't as reliable. It's not fair to say that everybody who's in the service industry is making a fair wage, an equal wage, in their tips. It's just something that you can't rely on, Mr. Speaker.

It's really disappointing that this is something that is moving forward. I would imagine that people in Alberta would like to have a say about that, and they would like to be able to express concern with how this bill is moving forward.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if we go back to that young 14-year-old who found themselves working, first time, just to escape some not great situations in the home, found themselves pregnant at 16 years old, struggled through school, worked part-time to raise a baby, and ended up successfully in postsecondary. This young person continued to fight for their education and to make sure that their child was taken care of. I can tell you that the story does have a happy ending. This young person was able to enter into the field of social work and was successful in being able to work at the school that they had graduated from at 18 years old. They were able to stay an extra year in high school, which is essential.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. member for her comments. Of course, 29(2)(a) will be available; however, I am going to step away from the chair for a brief rest.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

The Speaker: I just wanted to remind individuals – I hesitate, perhaps, because the conclusion of the story, which we may hear about under 29(2)(a), may in fact be people that we all know quite well here in the Chamber.

10:00 a.m.

But I just want to remind members as we proceed, with respect to relevance we all know that on page 628 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it says, "Consequently every member, who addresses the house, should endeavour to confine [him- or herself] as closely as possible to the question under consideration." While it was a very compelling story and I'm glad that you shared it, and I'm certain that you were going to tie it to the amendment that's before the Assembly because we aren't on the main bill, we are just talking – and not "just"; it's very important – about an amendment that is before the House. I encourage all members as we continue the important and robust debate that we remain predominantly focused on the question before the House.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Having said that, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising with what I hope is a brief question or comment.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This one will be brief. I was so compelled by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs' comments that I really wanted to make sure that we could hear the rest of that story. If she could please finish that, I'm sure all members of this Assembly would be riveted to continue.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Member, and thank you, Mr. Speaker, Madam Speaker, for some direction.

I would argue that this story is speaking to this. It talks about the human side of what this legislation will impact. I do believe strongly that there are many more Albertans that would like to have a say in this moving forward, and I don't believe that their voices are represented or that they were consulted with in this.

So, Madam Speaker, to conclude my story, I think the previous Speaker had alluded to who this person might be. In fact, it was me. That was my story. Because of the support that I got and being able to work part-time and go to school, I was able to become successful in social work and continued to work.

As a social worker I've seen the impacts that the minimum wage has on families who are struggling and trying to get by, and I've seen the workers that work so hard, and they're working 18 hours a day, trying to make sure that ends meet for their family. They're not working, for the most part, because they love what they do. A lot of people are out there working overtime because they need to make sure that they're putting food on their table, that their families are taken care of. Just the basic minimum to provide for themselves and for their families is often what these hard-working Albertans are doing. To take that away, Madam Speaker, I think is detrimental to Albertans and to families. I think that what we're asking in this amendment is something that all members of this Legislature should seriously consider; the impacts of this on average working Albertans, and that absolutely more input is needed. I just struggle to believe that enough input was done from the public to hear their stories. So me sharing my story today is to put the human side to what is happening and the impacts of this legislation.

I would hate to see young people dropping out of school so that they can make a fair wage. I think that that is devastating to our future and to our young people. There are young people out there that need to work. They need to go to school, and they need to work. When they're faced with the option of making a minimum wage as opposed to staying in school, sometimes out of necessity for life, Madam Speaker, they need to work, so they're going to take the option of dropping out of school, perhaps with the intention to return. I know I hear that story over and over: you know, I'll go back; I'll be able to upgrade; I'll get my education at one point. Unfortunately, the success of that isn't very high. We know that once you enter the workforce on a full-time basis, it's very unlikely that you're going to go back and get your education because you are in a place of just survival. That's a story that's told over and over.

I just don't believe that young people have been consulted with on this, and I don't know that average working Albertans have had an opportunity to have their say on the impact of what this bill is proposing. So I think it's very, very important that all members in this Assembly support this amendment to delay this bill so that we allow more public consultation and we can hear from people that perhaps weren't consulted when this bill was brought forward in its current form.

I know that members of the government are hoping to just get this through, but I think it's to the detriment of Albertans and working people and families that so heavily rely on overtime and just fair workers' rights, Madam Speaker. It's something that our government took very seriously when we looked at legislation that hadn't been looked at in over 30 years. It was very sad to see that it had just been neglected so long. I'm proud of the work that we did and the progress that we made.

I think that this legislation is going backwards, Madam Speaker, and Albertans – we want to be leading the country in what we're doing to support our people, and we want to be taking steps forward to ensure that everything that we're doing is really in the best interests of moving our province forward, of building our economy. Unfortunately, I don't think that this bill, where it's at, is doing what it claims to do. I don't believe that it's going to be drawing investment to Alberta or stimulating the economy, as it's claiming. I think it's going to . . . [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I begin my comments on Bill 2, I just want to commemorate the fact that 75 years ago today our brave Allied soldiers stormed the beaches of Normandy, freeing Europe from the tyranny of Nazism. I want to give thanks to all the brave men and women who served to liberate Europe from Fascism, certainly give thanks to those people and give thanks to all of the people who agreed, after World War II and the harsh economic and social conditions that preceded it in the Great Depression, that that should never happen again and engaged in a postwar, world-wide nation building effort, where people could rely on strong protections from government, you know, strong health care, strong public education, solid workers' rights, pension rights. It was the greatest advance for equality that the western world has seen in its history, and I'm so grateful for all of the people who engaged in that work to lift everybody up, to make sure that we live in peace. [applause]

I'm concerned, Madam Speaker, on that note, of course, that we see a very troubling rise in authoritarian politics in many places around the world, a troubling return to those very conditions that led to World War II. We've certainly been engaged in a number of

jurisdictions in a sustained attack on that postwar consensus view of government and the economy, one that continues in some form here in this bill that's before the Assembly today certainly, rolling back workers' protections, something that has long been held in many jurisdictions to be fundamental to human rights and equality all around the developed world.

That's why I urge everybody who is thinking about what those brave men and women sacrificed on the beaches of Normandy and other places – you know, they gave their lives not just to rid the world of Nazi tyranny but to build a better life for the generations that came after them. They were able to do that, and I think we owe it to them to remember what they built and not take it away from the generations that come after us. That's why I'm speaking in favour of this amendment this morning, because this bill, as my colleagues here in the Official Opposition have mentioned time and again, rolls back important protections that workers in Alberta have enjoyed.

I want to take a few minutes and share my own personal experience. We mentioned earlier today the youth minimum wage that has been implemented by the members opposite, you know, the creation of a dropout bonus for young people, which I think is a perverse incentive to encourage people to drop out of high school early in order to get a 15 per cent raise. In a province like Alberta, where we have very low rates of high school completion, very low rates of people transitioning from high school on to postsecondary education of any kind, we need to create incentives to actually encourage people to stay in school, to finish their high school diplomas, and to go on to complete a postsecondary education of some sort so that they can get a good education that will allow them to be engaged citizens who can participate in the public life of this province and not only that but get the skills and training that they need to get good jobs, Madam Speaker.

10:10 a.m.

It's shocking to me that the youth minimum wage creates a disincentive to high school completion and removes an important financial support for many young people that they rely upon to be able to pay for postsecondary education when they get that opportunity. You know, that will have a negative effect on the economy and the development of jobs in the province in the long term. I think there's no less disputed fact than that investment in people and their education is the best thing that any government can do to develop an economy, diversify an economy, and provide prosperity for future generations. I think the government should rethink this matter and certainly create incentives for people to complete high school and go on to postsecondary education.

On the matter of the youth employment wage the minister, the Member for Calgary-Varsity, says that it has been modelled on the youth employment wage that's set up in Ontario, so I quickly researched what Ontario has set up, and it's interesting, Madam Speaker. There are some very important differences, I think, between what the people of Ontario have chosen to do and what the members opposite have chosen to do with the youth minimum wage. The first is that the discrepancy between the student employment rate and the general minimum wage is something like 65 cents. A student will earn \$13.35 – I can't remember the exact number, Madam Speaker, but the general minimum wage earner will earn \$14. So it's a very narrow gap. What have we created here in Alberta? We've created a \$2 gap. So I think it's particularly unfair. If you say that you're going to model a youth employment wage on what's been done in Ontario, I think it would only be fair to then have a narrow gap between those two minimum wages, like the one Ontario has.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, about the minimum wage in Ontario is that it's legislatively tied to inflation, so the Ford government has implemented a freeze. It will freeze the minimum

wage at \$14 an hour for the calendar year of 2019, but then on January 1, 2020, minimum wage earners in all classes in Ontario will get a cost-of-living increase, which is not something that the members opposite have proposed. Not only are they reducing the student wage by \$2 an hour, but they're going to keep it there for a long time. I think that that's unfair as well because not only are we setting our students at a disadvantage now; we're setting them up for being further disadvantaged further into the future as the cost of living continues to rise, and minimum wage won't keep track with the cost of living. We're just setting our young people further and further behind, and I really don't think that that's fair.

Madam Speaker, we've had some very interesting stories about people's experiences earning minimum wage, and certainly I would like to share some of them. You know, it relates to the issue of overtime and why we don't think that this bill will generate investment in Alberta or stimulate the economy, which is why I think we should support this amendment. As a young person myself in the mid-90s I worked in a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant at minimum wage. I worked alongside people who were in many cases 10 or 20 years older than me, but we were doing the exact same work. My duties were the same as everybody else's in that restaurant. It didn't matter how old I was. We all were expected to carry our weight and carry out the same functions.

To think that I would have been paid \$2 less an hour than my co-workers simply because I was under the age of 18 strikes me as really unfair, especially when you consider how poorly treated a lot of fast-food workers are, not by their employers but by customers. I had a number of significant negative experiences working in fast food, which I know, Madam Speaker, comes as a surprise to you because I'm nothing if not a charming and likeable individual. You know, when people walk into a fast-food restaurant – and this is certainly not the case for the vast majority of Albertans. The vast majority of Albertans treat each other with dignity and respect, but there is a small but significant enough number of people to have a negative impact on one's work experience, who think that because they're ordering in a fast-food restaurant from a person who's getting paid to serve them, they can treat them as if they're lesser people.

It was very discouraging for me and my co-workers to have to put up with abuse that was not warranted given the work that we were expected to do. You know, fast-food workers have to work under very trying conditions. They work in hot and greasy kitchens, trying to deliver the food as fast as they can. People get very upset if things go even slightly wrong and don't have a lot of understanding, Madam Speaker, for the people who are working behind the till and behind the counter. It's definitely my experience that some people feel that because they're engaged in purchasing that food, they have the right to take out their frustrations in inappropriate ways on the staff. That's not fair.

That's why I think it's only fair that we pay people a decent wage at minimum wage, because the working conditions that they endure are often difficult and often much less pleasant than a lot of other jobs, that I've certainly had, where people treat you better. Madam Speaker, I get better treatment in my role as a politician than I did working in a fast-food restaurant, which should tell you something about how people treat workers in fast-food restaurants. So I would encourage all Albertans to remind themselves that the people who are serving them in fast-food restaurants are trying their best, that they're getting paid very low wages, and, you know, a little bit of kindness and empathy would go a long way to making their work lives better. That's the issue of the youth employment wage, and I would certainly urge people to consider that, urge the members opposite to reconsider their thinking on this.

It was interesting. In the fast-food world I was forced to work unpaid overtime. It was never written down, but it was always

expected. I had a list of duties that I had to complete before the end of my shift, and I was told how many hours I was going to get paid for that shift. If I didn't complete the duties within that time, I was still expected to complete those duties, but my pay ran out before I was able to complete them, Madam Speaker. Oddly enough – oddly enough – no one on the staff was able to complete their list of assigned duties before the pay ran out, which is weird, because either all of us must have been really lazy or our employers were not treating us fairly.

As a 16- and 17-year-old person, Madam Speaker – and this was in the pre-Internet age – I didn't have easy access to employment standards information. I didn't know that that was probably illegal, and in fact I don't even know if that was illegal at the time because I can't easily find out whether or not the employment standards that exist now existed at that time. To subject youth to these kinds of working conditions and expose them to unscrupulous employers and then pay them less and not compensate them fairly for their overtime, I think, is really unfair. When those workers are eligible for overtime, I think it's only fair that they get paid time and a half. Certainly, that's the case in every other jurisdiction in Canada.

10:20 a.m.

As the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and all of my other colleagues have mentioned today, you know, the issue of time and a half is based on a very old work-life balance premise, that there are eight hours in a day for work, there are eight hours in a day for personal time, and there are eight hours in a day for sleep. I would do almost anything for eight hours of sleep at this point, but thankfully we have some caffeine here to keep us going.

The Deputy Speaker: But, hon. member, is the caffeine really enough?

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member can continue to talk about the value of overtime given that this is such an important piece of what's under consideration in Bill 2 and such a fundamental reason why this amendment has been proposed and, in fact, is very likely one of the reasons why the hon. member is in such dire need of caffeine, as are we all, because it is so important that overtime be paid to workers, particularly workers in the oil and gas sector. I wonder if the hon. member would like to continue his thoughts on overtime, his experience with overtime, and perhaps some of his experience on the doorstep in the previous election when this came up as well, and what happened when he talked to working people about the threat, the looming notion, that their overtime may be significantly altered or changed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-West for the question. Certainly, prior to 2008 I was engaged in work in the private sector. I was a consultant in the oil and gas business. It was expected by my employer to regularly work overtime, and I was not allowed to get that paid out. The employer told me that I had to bank that overtime at 1 to 1 rates. I know that that's a common myth that the members opposite continue to spin, that employers and employees can voluntarily agree. You know, I was agreeing to either keep my job, or I was welcome to find something else. Oddly enough, everyone in that same industry had the same practice, so you couldn't find a place that was paying people time and a half or allowing them to bank it at time and a half, because that was the industry standard practice, to expect employees to bank their overtime at a 1 to 1 rate.

Madam Speaker, I think it took an incredible personal toll on me and my family. I spent many, many months away from home, living and working in camps in various places around Alberta, and, you know, I spent a lot of time away from my daughter, who was very young at the time. She was going to music lessons and ballet lessons and gymnastics and all of the things that we parents put our young kids through to develop them.

To think that somebody would now be able to at least be compensated fairly for that time away from their families and their children and given more money in their pockets to put towards things like hockey registration, soccer camps, those kinds of things, to take that away – I know the members opposite like to talk about the hockey dads and soccer moms who were, you know, punished under the carbon tax, but they don't think twice about punishing those same people with working overtime and not being paid fairly for it. I think it's grossly unfair to expect people who are working long hours far away from home, far away from their families, trying their best to get ahead and make a good life for their children and save enough for retirement – now that's going to be taken away, and that money is going to go directly into their employers' pockets.

It's not going to create jobs. It's not like my employer ever thought: well, because I don't have to pay this guy time and a half, I can hire more people. No, Madam Speaker. Of course, the hiring decisions were made independently of what the overtime rate was.

When I was working, there was a skills shortage. They couldn't hire enough people. You know, in those kinds of situations there should have been – free-market economics would tell you that because of a labour shortage, wages would go up, but they didn't in my case or in the cases of my fellow consultants. We were still beholden to the employer's interests and the industry standard practice of not paying people overtime and forcing them to bank it at a 1 to 1 rate. So I was very pleased that we made that change, that my colleagues in that field could actually see some light at the end of the tunnel.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [interjection] Yeah. Thanks for that, Member for Calgary-Buffalo. It's my honour to rise and speak to the amendment as proposed by my hon. colleague. I want to begin by saying how much I've appreciated hearing the thoughtful, people-focused discussion throughout the night and this morning.

I have to say to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs that her story – and I appreciate the way that she told it, too. We don't always, in these moments of 15 minutes, have an opportunity to really get to know the personal history and what drives each of us as servants of the public and what the lived experience is that drives us to see the world in which we do and to fight for the things, the values that we all share. I want to say to her, for her tremendous story about love and determination and perseverance, that thankfully she found herself in a situation where she was surrounded by people with those same things. She is here today fighting for other people who might be living those experiences or other parallel experiences. I found that really inspiring.

Another story I want to tell. In my visits to grade 6 classes the students ask often really astonishing questions. Usually I prepare for a media interview. I can usually anticipate most of the questions I'm going to get asked. I almost never anticipate the questions I'm going to get asked in grade 6 classes. One that I almost always get asked and many new members who will probably be visiting them is: did you always know that you wanted to have this job? And then

I get to talk about other jobs that I've had and other jobs I thought I might have. That's a really fun one.

But one that I remember as well was: what's one thing your government did that made you extra proud? And I just stopped and thought about it for a few seconds, and then I talked about the work we did to close the gap and to reduce child poverty in the province, reducing child poverty by half. Still much done, much more needs to be done to make sure that no child ever goes to school hungry, no child ever worries about how their parents are going to pay the rent, no child ever feels that they are pushed out of the safety that should be childhood at a time before they themselves are ready.

One of the things that I listed as a thing that helped, in my opinion and in much of the analysis I've seen written, is the tremendous determination that our Premier, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the Leader of the Official Opposition, showed in fighting to raise the minimum wage significantly. Many in this House probably worked at a time when minimum wage was \$5 an hour. When we came into government, it was about \$10, and today it's \$15 for everyone, something that I think is a trend that many jurisdictions in the world are aspiring to and are well on track to, but Alberta got there first. Alberta: I think many of us are known and proud of the fact that we're known as being enthusiastic and entrepreneurial and leaders in this province.

I think that that should apply for all folks in this province. I think that that should apply for the low-income earners as well, that they have an opportunity to receive fair compensation and to achieve great things doing the hard work that many do.

10:30 a.m.

I appreciate that the Member for Calgary-McCall last night talked about – oh, here's one thing. I sometimes tell this story, you know. An economist, a social worker, and a lawyer walk into the peace lounge. They're all the Member for Calgary-McCall – right? – with his tremendous lived experience.

An Hon. Member: And a refugee.

Ms Hoffman: And a refugee and a minimum-wage worker. As the hon. member put himself through all of those degrees, he worked minimum wage. He worked minimum wage because it was available and because it was important work and because people would hire him into those positions. I think that it is something that should be recognized and honoured for what it was.

What I wanted to say about that is that when I was in a school, I was talking about closing the gap on child poverty in the class that we did there, and I mentioned the minimum wage. Bless grade 6 students. They think "minimum," and they know that in the curricular outcomes "minimum" and "maximum" are tied together, so we started talking about maximums in the world. One kid said to me, "Is there a maximum number of jobs?" I immediately challenged my minister of economic development. I said: "We want all the jobs we can possibly get in this province. We're going to fight until we have full employment. We're going to fight to make sure that we've got opportunities for everyone in this province to be fully employed." And he said: "No. I mean, is there a maximum number of jobs my mom can have? She already works three."

He wanted to know if his mom at some point would have an opportunity to be home, to come on a field trip with him, maybe visit this very place with him, and it broke my heart a little bit. So we talked a little bit about why his mom was doing what she was doing, to create a better world for him. If any of those jobs were in the service industry, what we're being asked to consider is rolling back his mom's pay, possibly causing her to work yet a fourth job. Out of the mouths of babes, right? Minimum and maximum. So when you cut

the minimum, you put more pressure on the people who are currently working within that minimum to do more and for less.

Like many members, probably, in this House, I and, I know, many of our caucus members spent a period of time working in the service industry. When I was working in the service industry, some days I made good money, some days I made not good money, but almost every day I was asked to work extra because there was extra to be done. Again, as was mentioned by my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar, I did it. I did it, and I didn't ask about whether or not I should. I did it because the work needed to get done. I needed to get a paycheque.

I think that it's important that people who do that little bit extra get a little bit extra in their compensation. I think that's a fair practice. As our leader said when she was referencing working parents, I think about the idea of this young boy who asked me about the maximum number of jobs. His mom already had three. With the idea that if she was working late – and I'm sure she does many days – she would have to choose to either leave him unattended or pay for child care, I imagine that's a very difficult choice for many people. I think it would be more likely that he would be left unattended if that mom wasn't making a premium, if she wasn't making time and a half. If the money was that much tighter, he would probably be on his own. I don't think that's fair. I don't think that's fair to the kids of our province.

With regard to this bill and, in turn, the amendment that we're debating, another thing that I think is unfair and that I certainly don't think will do anything to support the economy – in fact, I think it'll be counter – is the provisions around general holiday pay. In fact, they actually seem quite mean and quite vengeful. I don't know who exactly the revenge is being sought out against, but I think they're mean, and I think they would be punishing. For example, general holiday pay is in many neighbouring jurisdictions, including Saskatchewan. I know that many members of this House feel a direct connection to Saskatchewan. It's also something that's in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, the territories. All of these other jurisdictions acknowledge that if you're working on a holiday, you should get general holiday pay. It seems reasonable.

In this bill that we're considering, or that we're considering passing an amendment to which would mean that we don't consider it at this time, we are being asked to make Albertans work at a lesser standard of pay than everyone in these other jurisdictions: Saskatchewan, B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, and the territories. To the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright: I can't help but wonder how fair it may or not be – I would say: may not be – to employees on one side of the border, because it probably is which jurisdiction you're working in and not which jurisdiction you're actually a resident of, to not get their general holiday pay.

The fact that this change comes in on September 1, right before Labour Day, is, again, particularly mean, right before the day where we're supposed to celebrate the rights and the progress that the labour movement has been taking and making and the fact that we all have an opportunity to benefit. For that holiday, that is indeed intended to celebrate the people who are working that day, they're going to lose their general holiday pay.

I think that another change that's mean in this is the change around requiring somebody to work for 30 days to qualify for general holiday pay even if they're working on that holiday. Again, this is something that isn't the case in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec. This is something that we're going to forge new territory on. If you're hired as a seasonal employee, which I imagine many, many Albertans are – I know a lot of the places that are especially busy this time of year have short-term employment. I'm picturing garden centres. I'm

picturing a number of different retailers during the month of December as people are preparing for Christmas. If you haven't worked 30 days, no general holiday pay even if you're working on Christmas. If you're a seasonal employee who's hired to work on Christmas but you haven't worked 30 days, your employer doesn't need to pay you. It does feel a little Scroogelike.

The other example that was mentioned is, you know, that Santa works in the mall on short-term contracts. If Santa ends up working in the mall on Christmas, no general holiday pay for Santa if Santa hasn't been there for 30 days, probably. Again, that is not exactly something that I would say is built on wanting to help people up. I'd say that it's built on hurting people who are serving us all by working on those general holidays or working in those time periods.

Another piece I want to mention is that I do believe wholeheartedly that this is going to be very good for stimulating the economy in one area, and that, I would say, is human rights and labour lawyers. I think they are going to be very busy fighting against what seems to be a human rights violation and, in my understanding, to be a violation of labour rights based on age discrimination. I think about some of the things that we've already seen go all the way to the highest levels of courts around discrimination based on age. Rather, I think the argument there was family status, but again the same argument applies if you're a family with somebody who is a minor. There was a ruling not that long ago, just in the last few years, that even condo boards or landlords can't discriminate based on age or family status. If we can apply it to living conditions, it seems like a not far correlation to draw it to working conditions.

I don't think many of us ran for this office because we wanted to create discriminatory conditions. I don't think many of us ran for office because we wanted to take money away from hard-working families on their general holidays. I don't think any of us ran because we really wanted to cut wages for that single mom who found herself in a very difficult situation. I imagine that probably, if she was told she could make \$2 more – you can get a can of tuna plus a salad – if you drop out of school, that would have been a very, very difficult decision for that teen mom to have made.

For these reasons, I really want to express my gratitude to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for bringing forward this amendment. I think that saying clearly that it not be read "because the Assembly is of the view [it] will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy" and that further input is required from the public is fair and reasonable.

10:40 a.m.

Again, I know that many members opposite will talk about: well, we got elected, so we can do what we want. Jobs, the economy, and pipelines were, I think, a lot of the taglines I remember seeing. I observed and seem to have processed some of the messaging that came. None of those talked about jobs where we further discrimination or jobs where we are going to make sure that some of our most marginalized have fewer opportunities.

To that young man who asked me about the maximum number of jobs: I think that that's a totally fair question. I think that the right for children to have an opportunity to spend some time with the people who love them is a fair request from that young man. One of the best ways we can do that is by making sure that there is a fair and reasonable minimum wage, work conditions, and compensation conditions for things like general holiday pay.

One other piece I'll mention, and it is one of the stories that helped inspire the suite of changes that we brought in to bring Alberta's workplace legislation to be fair and in line with most other jurisdictions in our country. It was the story that we heard about Amanda Jensen, who, when she found out her child had cancer and

needed some time off, in turn lost her job. Some people will say: shame on that employer; shame on that employer for firing somebody. But the truth is: shame on all of us for setting the conditions where that could have been possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is always an honour to hear from my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora. The words that she brought to us and to this debate were so important because, as she said, we have heard so much in the last 15 or so hours around lived experience and stories from members' constituents and colleagues and associates. It becomes very, very clear that Bill 2 really is the pick-your-pockets bill. It's really the bill that goes in and hurts families. It goes in to pick the pockets of hard-working Albertans.

We've heard many stories tonight. I encourage members – I know they were listening very closely the entire evening, Madam Speaker – to also look back at *Hansard* and the Blues, as they become available, because those stories are just a small number of the 400,000 employees who will be affected negatively by this bill, of the large number of workers who will be affected negatively by this bill.

We know it's going to be negative because this is a bill that attacks young people. It attacks labour. It attacks workers, and it takes away their vacation pay and banked overtime, and that's something that, Madam Speaker, is really just not what you do when Christmas rolls around. That's something that I think is really shameful. I think the members of the opposition have spent a great deal of time explaining over and over again why this will be so bad for families and why it will be so bad for workers.

But, Madam Speaker, we haven't heard a single thing from the government. Let me tell you that the silence is deafening. If the front bench cared about this bill and they thought it was a good bill, they would get up in this Assembly and defend it. They have chosen not to. If the backbench of the government thought that this was a good bill, they would get up in this Assembly and would defend their minister, defend this bill, but they decided not to.

What they have shown very clearly is that they either know that this is a bad bill or they haven't read the bill. Madam Speaker, I don't want either of those in my government front bench or in my government backbench, frankly. I think we should be held to a higher standard. We should know what we are voting on, and we should be willing to stand up and defend it, or we should be willing to stand up and oppose it. The government is not willing to do any of that, so they either know it's a terrible bill or they really just don't care. Both of those are bad for Albertans.

It's going to hurt our families, it's going to hurt our constituents, Madam Speaker, and it's something that, really, the opposition is dedicated to fighting against. We're here to make sure that the sunlight will shine on this bill and that people will know how this will hurt their families. They will know how the government is trying to appease their wealthy donors and friends and pick the pockets of families all across Alberta. If this government really cared about these workers, if this government really cared about these families, they would get up and speak to why their bill was strong and why their bill was going to encourage investment and economic growth and for families to succeed, but they won't.

I'm concerned that that's because they have no explanation. They actually don't have any reasons that this is a good bill. That would be something that's very concerning. It would be something that would mean that the members of the government either think that what they write is made of gold, or perhaps they really just don't

understand the legislative process. This is democracy in action. Democracy demands that we talk about the issues we care about as legislators. We were sent here by our constituents to talk about the issues we care about.

Let me tell you, this is an issue that affects over 400,000 Albertans. It affects people in every single constituency that we were sent here to represent. It is going to affect families across the board; 400,000 workers means many, many more families. What that means is that this government needs to explain to those families why they are bringing in a bill that picks their pockets, why they are bringing in a bill that attacks workers, why they are bringing in a bill that hurts families around the general holiday seasons, Madam Speaker.

This government should have the moral fortitude to stand up and speak to it. But, really, we can see that the silence, again, is deafening. They refuse to stand up. They refuse to defend their own bill. This is something that is really unprecedented, that they've introduced a bill and decided: "Well, maybe it's not so good, so we just won't talk about it. We'll hope it'll go away, and we'll vote on it, and maybe that will work." But, Madam Speaker, let me tell you, the opposition will not let that happen. The opposition will continue to talk about why this bill picks the pockets of families, why this bill is bad for Albertans, and we will continue to fight against this affront to democracy that the government, front bench and backbench, appears to be complacent in.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very moved by the spirited representations from the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, my hon. colleague, especially given the fact that, you know, here's a guy who really is working overtime at this point.

It's important to draw attention to the fact that we are here to discuss this important amendment which, indeed, proposes that this bill is not read a second time on the grounds, Madam Speaker, that it will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that we do require some further input from the public. Speaking to this amendment gives the public an opportunity to engage in these conversations, to perhaps tune in to the Legislative Assembly and see their representatives hard at work doing what the people elected us to do, which is that when a bill proposes to affect people's daily lives, that bill ought to be appropriately scrutinized by legislators on all sides of the House.

No matter what party we were elected to, Madam Speaker, you know, the Westminster parliamentary system demands that we are here as individuals, that we represent our individual constituency, our individual communities. We've heard many people describe the vibrant neighbourhoods that make up their constituencies, the reasons why they came into public life. Now we are in a position where we are actually bringing that representation to life through our interventions, through proposing thoughtful amendments to legislation such as this amendment that I rise in favour of this morning.

You know, I think it's important that this amendment indicates that further public input is necessary. The reason for that, Madam Speaker, is that during the election campaign it was alleged that overtime was not going to be changed. The claim was made at the time that this would mean no changes whatsoever to people's banked overtime arrangements.

10:50 a.m.

People took great umbrage, as I recall, when the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the leader of the New Democratic Party, made an intervention about halfway through the campaign, saying, "Well, look, this will have a profound effect on people's bottom lines, on the ability to afford that new vehicle, perhaps the ability to afford many of the unexpected expenses that come up in daily life for homeowners, for others, for family members, and certainly in the oil and gas sector for people who had been through the historic downturn in the price of oil, people who had already been through potentially a number of very disruptive situations in terms of their family budget." Certainly, the proposal to make drastic changes to banked overtime such that thousands of dollars over a three- or four-month period might vaporize out of people's bank accounts was quite alarming to people. But at the time the answer, the rejoinder to that particular concern from the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was: "No, no, no. Not to worry. Nothing to see here." So the public was told at that time that there would be no changes to their overtime arrangements. And now we see that further input from the public is in fact necessary because that claim was not then reflected in the reality of the actions that government undertook: not quite as Bill 1, but as soon as they could get to it, in Bill 2, Madam Speaker.

I remember being on the doorstep during that sort of 48-hour period when there was some back-and-forth on what would happen to people's overtime. I remember standing on a doorstep on the north side of Lethbridge, talking to a guy. It was a windy Saturday afternoon. He could barely keep his screen door open, the poor guy. It was gusting in at 100 kilometres an hour. It was one of those times where, after about an hour, you choose to go and knock on some doors in some apartments, not because it's minus 40 but because the wind is giving 'er that day. So I'm talking to this guy, and he actually comes out of his house because we were probably going to lose his screen door if he didn't. We were standing there, and my hair is flying up like Donald Trump's on a good day. Here was a fellow who had been in and out of service rig jobs and that kind of stuff. He had a pretty new pickup truck in his yard, and I said: "Oh, that's a new truck. Is that yours?" Yeah. Okay. And I said to him, "Have you heard about this overtime stuff?" And he said: "Yeah. And I tell you what: I will not be able to afford my truck payments if those guys do that, and that's why you can put a sign on this lawn."

That's the kind of working-class person that sent me here to stand here. It's certainly the kind of folks that I come from in terms of my own background. My dad was a guy, not unlike that fellow, who worked as an electrician on oil rigs. One of the things that my dad always said was: "When you go to work, you have to be straight with your co-workers because if not, somebody will get electrocuted. It's a big old rig, and that's a lot of electricity." At that time it reminded me, as I was standing on this guy's doorstep, talking to him about his overtime, because he said to me: "You know, the leader of the Conservatives says that they're not going to do it. They're not going to do it on overtime." And I said: "I don't know, man. Look at what they actually said." And, sure enough, here we are. I remember where that guy lives. I might go drop off a little letter to him when I get home on the weekend, if I ever get home and leave this place, Madam Speaker.

Those are the kinds of folks that this bill will affect. A lot of those folks did vote Conservative, Madam Speaker. They're going to look at this, and they're going to go: "Oh, okay. Maybe I parked it with the NDP in 2015, and I parked it because of jobs and the economy for the same reason in 2019." There are going to be some real, material effects for those working-class folks, folks in particular in

the oil and gas industry. Our numbers show that oil and gas workers are some of the most often to avail themselves of banked overtime arrangements. That's exactly the kind of people who are not going to get thousands of dollars a year to which they are entitled and they worked darn hard for. They worked darn hard for that money. That's one of the reasons why further input from the public is necessary, and that is why I will be supporting this amendment.

Another reason, Madam Speaker, is that another family that I talked to – they live over on the west side in one of the more established neighbourhoods in kind of a duplex. I had canvassed quite a bit in that area over the last seven years, so I knew most of the families, but for whatever reason I hadn't ever connected with these folks. They came to the door, and they knew me, and, you know, the woman who came to the door, she kind of came out and gave me a hug. That was fun. I noticed they had two sort of older teenagers, early millennials, if you will, kids in the house. They were kind of circulating behind her. Then her husband came to the door as well. He was not looking well. So I said: how's it been going? He very clearly had just come from the hospital or something. He still had, like, his band on. He said: well, first of all, we need a cardiac catheterization lab in Lethbridge. I said: yeah; nothing could be closer to the truth on that piece.

You know, drastically cutting the heart out of health care services because you're going to give 4 and a half billion dollars away in a corporate tax cut: that's not helpful, certainly not to these folks. These are not the kinds of people who are going to pay to get to the front of the line in health care, certainly not these people. He started telling me how he had to take some time out of the workforce due to some heart complications, some other health care challenges, and I believe his wife worked at some kind of health care service provision job. So she was also concerned about health care.

I said: "Oh, so the kids are still at home. I see one of them here. Okay. She lives here, and the other one? Okay. Yeah. She's still here, too." And they said: "Yeah. Our 17-year-old has gone and gotten a job now because things are pretty tight around here." And I said: "Oh, well, so those changes to minimum wage probably really helped your family, right?" And they said: "Yeah. You know, I think we would probably prefer that she didn't have to contribute to the family budget, but here we are due to health care complications and everything else."

You know, these are the kinds of people who sent me here. So now that young woman, who was working at a service industry job to help her own family budget, basically when she walks to work in the morning, she's going to have a trail of Conservatives pulling toonies out of her pocket for every hour she works, Madam Speaker. While that image may be somewhat amusing, the impact on the bottom line is not funny at all.

That is the other reason, Madam Speaker, why further input from the public is necessary, and maybe a little remedial door-knocking for some of the members over on the government benches might be in order here. You know, maybe going out and actually – I can make the leaflets, and we can all go out and talk to people in working-class neighbourhoods about pulling toonies out of their pocket for every hour they work and going in and scooping all those truck payments and everything else that will come from banked overtime for oil and gas workers. I don't mind doing that. We could even maybe have some kind of a buddy system for MLAs, and we can all go together in a great spirit of postpartisanship, go and talk to working people about the . . .

Ms Hoffman: Nonpartisan issue.

Ms Phillips: Yes. The nonpartisan issue of how much oil and gas workers should be compensated for their overtime hours.

That's a proposal that is certainly not reflected in this amendment, Madam Speaker, but it is in the spirit of what this amendment proposes, which is, of course, that further public input is necessary.

One of the things that I think is really, really key about this bill in terms of the \$15 to \$17 differential minimum wage – you know, like, there are further proposals that may propose a liquor servers' differential wage for people in the service industry at some point. There are a couple of things there that are highly problematic. One is that people who earn low wages spend them at small businesses. Again, if anyone would like to undertake a collegial exercise in doing a little tour of downtown businesses in Lethbridge, we can go talk to some of our friends at the Owl Acoustic Lounge or Kapow comics and cards or Plum Restaurant or a number of different clothing shops and so on owned by people who feel very strongly about paying an appropriate minimum wage. In fact, at the time when we were elected, in 2015, many of them spoke out locally in favour of such a policy.

11:00 a.m.

I remember my friend Wallie, who runs a comics and cards business right downtown, saying straight up: well, who do you think buys comics and cards? It's low-wage workers, and when they make more, I make more. That, I think, is an important insight in terms of the circulation of money among the lowest paid people, in fact the people who are working very hard to keep our downtowns vibrant, to keep our small-business scene vibrant.

It's one of the reasons why people like coming to Lethbridge, because we have so many cool little businesses. That's because we want to empower young people to participate fully in the economy. We want to empower young people to build their lives, their hobbies, to have that access to a good, solid middle-class life, that we've sort of seen evaporate in many ways as inequality has worsened over the last 40 years, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wanted to first of all just say to all of the people who have been working all night how much we honour your contributions. I know there are folks from *Hansard*, there are folks who are sheriffs and sergeants and commissionaires, and the list goes on. I don't think anyone asked them, "Hey, would you be interested in staying an extra 12 hours today?" but we are tremendously grateful, and we want to say thank you for everything you do to keep us safe and keep this place accountable. I also want to say: I think you deserve time and a half. There's that.

To the hon. member, I want to know if . . .

Mr. Ellis: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Ms Hoffman: Oh. Great.

The Deputy Speaker: A point of order has been called. The hon. whip.

Point of Order

Referring to Employees of the Legislature

Mr. Ellis: Madam Speaker, I'm just going to refer to 23(b), "speaks to matters other than . . . the question under discussion." We, of course, those who were here all night, also thank those who stayed and certainly one hundred per cent appreciate the time and effort put in.

However, I would like to refer to the ruling by the hon. Speaker, who asked the Assembly not to refer to those who work in this Assembly and to specifically their wages, what they may or may not be getting. That was the ruling earlier of the Speaker throughout the night. We certainly, of course, respect and appreciate all the hard work that these people are doing, but this is not the place to refer to these people and what they may or may not make.

Thank you.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, I think a number of us have been in here for a while, and I think we're all aware that at times, particularly when we've been going on with an issue for a while, people do tend to diverge a little bit, and for that I will apologize. I think the idea here – and I think it's quite common; I mean, certainly, we saw it from the members across the way on a number of different bills when we were in government – is to try to really discuss the impact that this is having on the lives of people out there in the real world. This is, after all, a reasoned amendment that we're speaking to currently, and the reason in this case is to take the time to reflect on what exactly the impact of this is going to be. I think the stories of individuals who are out there working who are affected by this policy are highly relevant, incredibly relevant, at least as relevant, I would argue, as the individuals who the members across the way discussed, you know, on things like the Climate Leadership Act.

I think the point of this reasoned amendment is to slow it down and to reflect on exactly that sort of thing. I don't believe that this is a point of order. We are happy to steer the discussion back a little bit more towards the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Additional comments? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I was here last night when the Speaker made the ruling, and he clearly said that it doesn't matter what time it is. He clearly said that we were supposed to leave the people in this building out of this discussion. It was very clearly said. So I think this is a point of order.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: It's not really an additional comment, Member.

I do not have the ruling of the Speaker from earlier this evening. However, I very much believe that members in this House are very much aware of what has been said earlier, and perhaps this is an opportunity to be reminded to be a little bit more careful as we move through this debate.

I'd just like to add an additional reminder that we be very careful to stay on topic for this amendment and what it's saying. This has been a very long night and a long morning. I'm not sure anybody is out of air yet, so let's stay focused and not incite others to stand up and call points of order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Debate Continued

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I can definitely do my part in the debate, but I certainly can't control all individual members of this House. So thank you very much for your caution on that.

My point, Madam Speaker, is that we're not talking about theoretical people. We are talking about real people, real people who live and work around us, real people who live and work in our constituencies, our bosses. We're talking about them and the money that we're picking out of their pockets. So I appreciate that feedback.

I also appreciate the narrative that the member was painting. I think we actually have a Red Lobster caucus. I was wondering if the hon. member would talk about – when I was working a really long shift and the staff that had just got let off at the Xwrecks or at the Hilltop pub would come into where I worked, the Ottewell neighbourhood pub, I'd be, like: hey, solidarity. Man, if they had a good tip night, I was going to get a good tip night. They'd make it really obvious to all my regulars that they were overtipping me and put that pressure on everyone else to overtip me. It definitely created a lot more money in the local economy because I immediately the next day would go to the Hilltop pub or to Xwrecks and I'd pay the gift back.

I wondered if the hon. member could talk a little bit about what she did and the camaraderie she saw and how that extra money in the local economy is stimulated through people like the service workers that we're considering picking the pockets of today.

The Deputy Speaker: Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's an interesting inquiry. I worked in the service industry for a very long time. I was probably, when you add it all up, a waitress for about 10 years. When people ask me, you know, "What are the skills you need to be in politics?" I say: well, if you've been a server, you probably have it covered. You can talk to almost anybody. You can solve problems. You do it with a smile on your face. You end up interacting with the full rainbow of humanity, and sometimes you see the good and the bad. To the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's prior comments: it makes you a lot better customer, just a better human out there in the world.

You know, whenever I come across young people in the service industry now, I know how hard they're working. Things are even tougher now, I think, for young people to get ahead. That's why it's so distressing when we're doing things that will pick the pockets of young people, that will take money out of their pockets. Differential wages as well for service workers are also, you know, deeply problematic. It was really distressing to me when I heard the then leader of the UCP talking about millennials thinking that the government is an ATM, sort of, like, harshing on millennials. From my experience, they're working just as hard as anyone else, maybe harder because life is different now in terms of home ownership affordability and all of these other things that have changed a lot even since I was in that world in the early 1990s.

11:10 a.m.

I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and I share many years of working at a Red Lobster, she in Calgary and me in Edmonton. The one that I worked at in the west end actually just unionized, I found out, which was interesting. But even at that point, it was a great place to work. I mean, we got benefits and a few other things, right? It was different from many of my other colleagues in pubs and restaurants throughout Edmonton, on the west side of Edmonton in particular because that's where I grew up. Yeah, we used to probably go and spend too many of our tips after our shift, necessitating picking up extra shifts. That was kind of my business motto for a long time.

Certainly, that money does circulate within the economy, but the other place it circulates is into your tuition fees, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, that is the case for many young people now, and through freezing tuition, we have, you know, saved people thousands of dollars.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any more speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning to you. Thank you for acknowledging me and allowing me to participate in this discussion this morning, which has been diligently and continuously going on since early last night. We find ourselves this morning discussing an amendment to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I really like that word "make" Alberta.

I know that in earlier discussions I had started to make some comments. Unfortunately – you were even in the chair – I'd run out of time and didn't get a chance to finish my story. I guess this might pose an opportunity for me to discuss this, why it is so important that we tap on the brake, take some sober second thought, and consult with some of the people that this may affect.

As I'd mentioned the last time, in my much younger youth I had the opportunity to play a very long career in basketball, starting as early as junior high, and I even had the chance to play at the college level as well. One of the things that I learned over those years from all the coaching that I received, you know, is that players are asked to stick to their plays. That's what helps them to score baskets. But sometimes as players we can get really, really focused on having to make that play, especially when part of that play maybe involves a really tricky pass that just looks really good, and your teammate gets to go in and dunk the ball. It's fantastic. The crowd goes nuts, and it really fires you up. You get excited about that moment, making what we lovingly call the pretty play.

When I look at this bill, I'm starting to possibly see some similarities. As we know, members from the government side have gone on at length about the election and winning that election. There's that excitement around winning. "We won the election. We have the majority. We have been given the mandate to move forward on what we said we would." I think that possibly, Madam Speaker, some people are getting a little caught up in the excitement of that, even just right in the title of the bill, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

See, what we found, Madam Speaker, is that when you are, as it's known in the game, forcing the play, looking to make that pretty pass so your teammate can just drive the crowd nuts, more times than not you end up throwing the ball away to the opposition, which usually means they end up scoring against you. Now you're even further behind. So I'm wondering if we might be forcing the play here just a little bit because we're going to make Alberta open for business. I think there's a little assumption here that it was never open to begin with, which I would kind of tend to disagree with. I know that during the election I struggled a little bit trying to find a campaign office, and the same thing back in the 2015 election. The great news was that business was booming in Edmonton-Decore, and there just wasn't any room to find a campaign office.

The bad news, from my end of things, was that business was booming, and there was no room to find a campaign office. But you know what? I was really okay with that because business was booming. So when I hear this "make Alberta open for business," I'm a little confused because I thought it was open for business. That's what I saw all around in my constituency, thriving businesses that I love to go spend my money in. There are some amazing places in Edmonton-Decore known as the shopping

district: three major malls, all kinds of restaurants. I welcome anybody to come. There's terrific food there, lots of variety.

We need to take a bit of a sober second thought, just tap on the brake and put a little bit of pause on here because not only do I find some concern in just the title, Madam Speaker, but there are other concerns that I have around the bill. As everybody knows, we've maybe not so lovingly adopted a little bit of a nickname by calling it the pick-your-pockets bill.

I have a couple of friends that, shall we say, don't necessarily share my political views. That's okay. It doesn't preclude us from being friends. We just simply don't talk about politics. I was taken aback, quite surprisingly so, when they called me after the introduction of this bill and said to me, "Is this bill for real?" I said, "Well, what do you mean?" "Well, I've heard that I'm going to lose, potentially, my overtime pay." "Well, unfortunately, yeah, that's probably the case." "I also have another question: my child is going to be paid less than somebody doing the exact same job?" "Well, yeah, that's what the bill is proposing." Unfortunately, I could not repeat what came after that. I fear you would most likely deem it to be unparliamentary language, but the gist of it was that they were not happy.

As I'd mentioned earlier about these friends, we just don't share the same political views. Right there, that also now starts to tell me that we need to tap on the brake. We need to slow this down just a bit and go talk to some of the people that this is affecting, like our oil and gas workers. I have friends that work in the industry – electricians, pipefitters – and they tend to work a lot of overtime. They enjoy it: hey, fill your boots, 20 or 30 hours of overtime, absolutely. If that's what helps you to attain the goals that you're after, I'm all for it. But they were not happy at potentially losing that money because that is, in a sense, their reward for taking their time away from their family, from their friends, or just simply their plain old free time. Time and a half is the reward, and whether you bank it or you're paid out, it's still overtime.

I think that with what we have in this bill, we might as well just change the name "overtime" and just get rid of it because there's really no use for it. We'll just call everything regular time. You're just going to get paid regular time. That in itself, Madam Speaker, I think brings some pause.

I look at the youth wage. Now, I'm very, very excited by the fact that with the new boundary redraws after this election, I went from 21 to 26 schools in Edmonton-Decore. I'm very, very excited. I've got all the high schools in north Edmonton, and I try to spend as much time as I can visiting those schools. Usually that's at least twice a year for all of them, for some a little bit more, and I get the opportunity to talk to students all the time. I'm going to maybe take a shot in the dark here with some of my colleagues over here on this side, and I'm going to bet there's a bit of a consensus around the fact that we should be listening to our young emerging leaders.

11:20 a.m.

You know, I think things have changed a little bit since I was that age. Maybe back then I was a little bit more worried about things like when the next basketball game was or what time dinner was. I'm clearly finding that the youth in my schools are very, very engaged, and surprisingly so. I've quite honestly made quite the commitment to listen to my students because more often than not they have some very incredible ideas to share. I actually joked quite consistently with the Member for Lethbridge-West when she was environment minister. I have some students over at Queen E that put together a climate paper. At one point I literally had to pull the member over, and I said: "Okay. Are you feeding them information?" And I even posed it to them, too. I said: "Okay.

Who's your contact in the ministry? How is it that your paper almost perfectly mirrors the climate leadership plan?"

Engaging with our young emerging leaders – coincidentally, it's funny how these youth that we're looking at giving a \$2-an-hour pay cut to weren't able to vote in the election. I'm wondering what would have happened had they had the opportunity. Of course, I'm very grateful because of the student vote. The students in Edmonton-Decore very graciously re-elected me out of their vote. That's why I feel it's almost a duty, quite honestly, that I hear them, that I consider their words, and I don't think that has happened here in Bill 2.

We've certainly heard from members opposite about: well, \$13 an hour is better than zero dollars an hour. I guess that in its plain form, sure, it would be better, but did we consider the young emerging leaders that are already currently working? We've heard from many members over here that some of our youth 17 years of age, who have made personal decisions to strike out on their own for whatever various reasons there are, have bills to pay. Yet they still want to go to school. We are about to make their lives much more difficult by passing this legislation as it is right now. What we're telling our young emerging leaders: "You know what? It's all in the name of the economy, and I'm sorry that you've got to pay the price." It's those kinds of things where I see – the title that we seem to have adopted around picking your pockets: well, we are quite literally picking their pockets.

I also want to touch a little bit on the liquor server differential wage. I remember from back in my times – I suppose I should probably prepare the House, Madam Speaker, because I'm sure the teeth gnashing is going to start and that bodies are going to tense up – my experience in the union world. There's that word, "union." I very specifically remember going to support a demonstration around a restaurant very, very close by here. Employees there were mad. They were trying to form a union, and I'll get to that part of it in the beginning. But part of the reason why they were trying to form this was that the requests of the owners were quite demeaning to women. They were saying: "We're not necessarily making enough money. Tips: one day they're up; the next day they're down. It's uncertain. We need to try to make a little bit more money." The owner's solution to that was: "Well, we'll change the uniform. We'll make that skirt a little bit higher. We'll make that top drop a little bit lower. That will entice customers to give you a tip." I'll be honest with you: that disgusts me; that point of view really has no place.

What we're saying is that for the majority of our liquor servers, who are women, by bringing this back, we are opening up the door again, potentially, to that kind of behaviour by bad actors. I'm going to say right here, right now, because they're right in my very own riding, that I have some fantastic businesses. They value their employees very much. I'm very grateful for that. Those are the individuals that, you know, we don't have to worry about.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was great to hear the hon. member talk about his experience and why further public input is necessary into this bill and why he supports this amendment. Certainly, hearing stories of working people and his own experience and why the public should have more input into this bill was, I think, helpful to the overall debate and our consideration of this amendment.

It did put in my mind, Madam Speaker, that we have a lot of people on this side of the House who have done a lot of work with ordinary, working-class people. It actually reminded me of

something that Jay-Z talks about. Yes, Jay-Z. In his last album with Beyoncé he said:

Over here we measure success by how many people [are]
successful next to you
Here we say you broke if everybody [else] is broke except for
you.

That's exactly the kind of input and the kind of experience and the kind of ethic that defines this NDP caucus and certainly the working background of many of the people on this side. If the member could talk a little bit more about what kind of public input might be necessary and, you know, about our life experience in terms of measuring success by lifting everyone else up, just as Jay-Z and Beyoncé suggest that we might – you know, that song is called *Boss*. Certainly, on this side of the House that is a pretty boss kind of ethic in terms of representing working-class people, and I want to hear more about how the hon. member has done so.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess that here's where maybe – I don't know – my age might be showing a little bit. Of course, the Member for Lethbridge-West is probably much younger than I am. Jay-T. I thought: who is that?

An Hon. Member: Jay-Z, not Jay-T. Jay-Z.

Mr. Nielsen: Point taken. Apparently, I need to update my library a little bit, and perhaps, maybe, the Member for Lethbridge-West can help me with that endeavour at a later time.

Around her questions around the kinds of people that we need to be engaging with: I mentioned earlier that we need to be engaging with our youth, the ones that are 17 years of age or younger, because they're the ones currently working that will receive that pay cut, our liquor servers, and how they feel about going back to, potentially, quite honestly, a precarious wage, tips going up and down day to day. I've heard some stories, in a fun way, about getting a chance to go back to some of those establishments and pay it forward. Certainly, I'm not going to say that after one wobbly pop my tip is probably here, maybe after two or three my tip tends to climb, but mostly it's because I get fantastic service, it seems, everywhere I go in Edmonton-Decore. Again I invite members: come to Edmonton-Decore. We have some fantastic businesses there, and the level of service is absolutely amazing.

11:30 a.m.

Back to the consultation, we need to be reaching out to, quite frankly, all workers in Alberta. I know that sounds like a daunting task, but anywhere where somebody has the potential to work overtime – and I'm saying "potential" because this rule around overtime will affect them. I don't know if there are any workers in the province that get any kind of holidays off; we might want to talk to them as well.

Maybe around some of the administrative burden: of course, as the critic for red tape I do find it a little bit ironic that we are creating some potential work for our amazing businesses around trying to keep track of how old somebody is, if they are in school or not. I certainly hope that any of our students that are in Edmonton-Decore watching today do not make that consideration: maybe I should leave school just so I can get a \$2-an-hour raise. I think we shouldn't put them in that type of position and make sure that they are getting paid duly for what they do, with everybody else.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll speak to the notice of the amendment that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview put in last night, moving that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, which, really, is a pick-your-pockets bill, be amended by deleting everything after "that" so that we can look at Bill 2 further. It's this part here of the amendment, that

the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

Madam Speaker, before I begin on that, I'd like to, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did, recognize that 75 years ago today our proud men and women of the Canadian Forces were part of an invasion of Europe to free Europe from Naziism. My own father was not part of that invasion as he was just 17 years old at that time, but he joined the Canadian Forces two years later and was shipped over and spent three years in Europe and was demobbed after the end of the war and came home. I bring that up because as all of us in this room here grew up, we were influenced by our parents and immediate family and loved ones.

The whole issue of fairness was something that we all learned. I can appreciate that there are different understandings or views of fairness. From my father's perspective, it was very much the kind of thing that gets set out here. You know, your word is your bond. I'm from eastern Canada, the Ontario area, and his view of fairness was that you make a deal and you stick to it. I never saw a contract – and maybe it was because I was too young – but he worked in back-breaking work all his life, in contracting the building of homes and working as a general contractor and a block- and brickwork and concrete specialist. I never saw a contract the entire time I can remember him going to work. He and his partners agreed on a job, they set a price, and they did the job.

I think that's what we want for this notice of amendment, to have an opportunity for the public to weigh in on the whole issue of the contract that was set around labour standards and wages with Albertans over two years ago. That contract was around, for instance, minimum wages. Those minimum wages are set at \$15 an hour. As you know, this bill, that we hope to see amendments to, purports to make it better for youth to be paid \$2 less an hour if you're a young person between 13 and 18.

I think Albertans, particularly that age group, would have a distinct concern with that. The contract has been out there since October. It is something that everybody is used to, and it will change going forward, and colleagues here spoke eloquently about why it's necessary to keep that contract, because of the important need for money that young people have growing up.

I want to say, too, that I don't believe that this bill and Bill 3, which is the largest corporate tax giveaway in Alberta's history, will stimulate the economy to the degree that the opposite benches believe they will. I don't believe they'll draw investment to this province. You know, during the election campaign that we've closed out, I can remember repeatedly jobs, the economy, and pipelines being talked about, and the premise was that the economy would grow at 3 per cent per year. I remember distinctly hearing the Premier say 3 per cent per year, that if we do that, the suite of changes that we're bringing in will stimulate the economy to that amount. The GDP will grow 3 per cent a year. Not one year, not two years in a row, not three years in a row, but it will continue at that rather moderately high running rate for an economy going forward, you know, seemingly in perpetuity.

That hasn't happened in Alberta. There have been, obviously, booms and busts in this province. In 2017, I think, there was a significant bounce back in the economy at 4.5 per cent, but that has levelled off, Madam Speaker. I remember the Premier making a pledge. Then he was not the Premier, of course. The pledge that was generally talked about by him and others is that we'll balance in

2022, we'll grow the economy at 3 per cent per year, we'll maintain the level of spending at the amount it is now, and no services will be reduced or cut. Those are the general pledges I remember. It may have a difference in emphasis somewhere, but that's what I remember being said repeatedly.

Growing the economy at 3 per cent per year, as I said, is a moderately high running rate for this province, and it's based, people on the other side said, on economists' reports. But I want to point out that there are other economists who don't agree with that, Madam Speaker. Many other economists don't agree with that. I would submit that the circumstances between the election and now are vastly different, and they're vastly different in terms of our economy because since the election the prolonged constraints on the takeaway of oil from this province are weighing heavily on this province. The cancellation of the crude-by-rail agreement is going to weigh even heavier on this province. There's significant chop in the world economy, caused by many things. One of those things is the U.S. tariffs that are being levied around the world and the response by countries to the U.S. tariffs in return.

11:40 a.m.

Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill: I think that from the time it was written, the time of the election, to now our circumstances in this province are vastly different, and we need further input, we need further deliberation, and we need further sober second thought. The member previous to me was talking about tapping the brakes and taking a second look at all of this. There's nothing wrong with doing that, Madam Speaker. In fact, I think Albertans would appreciate the opportunity to not only weigh in but to know that we're taking the opportunity to look at the different circumstances.

The impression I get from people on the other side is that we must go fast, follow through with the commitments we made. You know, I don't know when the platform was written. I know there are several versions of the platform that they brought forward, and it seemed to be updated regularly. So I don't know when it was written or rewritten. I know the circumstances are different, and I know that Albertans would appreciate a second look at all of this.

You know, the view that we might hear is that Albertans aren't happy about changes to their banked overtime. The Leader of the Opposition was eloquent this morning around what that impact would be, for instance, on an oil field worker making a significant amount of money per hour, but they would not get that hourly rate if that overtime was banked and they were paid out in straight time. They wouldn't get their time and a half.

The holiday pay changes. You know, another member on the opposite bench has talked about working stiff, and I think he properly implied that it's a person who goes to work every day and just puts their nose down and their tail up and they're working hard. If more people knew about the changes to holiday pay that are proposed in Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, they would not be pleased, Madam Speaker. They would not be: I signed up for that.

The certification vote changes. Again, Madam Speaker, that's a contract that was made as a result of labour code changes recently, a labour code that hadn't been looked at for 30 years. I don't think there would be a great deal of support in the ranks of the working stiff for those changes.

Rolling back wages for youth, Madam Speaker: that's, you know, in a way, going after those with the least ability to help themselves or have their voices heard. Not that everyone in this place does not believe that young people need to be encouraged and supported and valued and nurtured and mentored. We need to do those things regularly for young people, and I know that I'm not alone in everyone here believing that that's how you help the next

generation, the younger generation, to come up and to take over as leaders.

In total, Madam Speaker, there are a number of things that we need to have a second look at. The amount of investment that is purported to come into this province as a result of a suite of bills that are before us is highly suspect, is highly questionable, especially when there are many people on the other side who question it. For instance, a 3 per cent GDP growth per year as a moderately high running rate going forward: I'm not sure why we can believe that at this point. We saw information – it could have been the Conference Board – come out last week that did not show Alberta being anywhere close to that. That's regrettable. There are reasons for it. The previous government was working on solutions to that, Madam Speaker – crude by rail is a solution to that – the efforts to make sure that the federal government approved pipelines. And they bought a pipeline at \$4.5 billion. That is something that doesn't get talked about a lot here.

You know, they didn't just decide that it was good on their own to do that. They needed to be convinced. We had the Premier and the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks and the entire cabinet, the Executive Council, focused on that, and it happened. It was groundbreaking for that investment to take place and not only that investment but a commitment to expand the pipeline to tidewater, something that hasn't happened in this province.

That's part of the chop in the economy, that's part of the headwinds we're facing, and that's part of the reason that crude by rail and the curtailment and easing off as the supplies of oil dwindle down in this province are so important. But that doesn't get talked about here, Madam Speaker. What gets talked about is an act to pick your pockets. What gets talked about is the largest giveaway of corporate taxes probably of any province in this country.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise under 29(2)(a) in response to the member opposite's speech for a number of reasons – a number of things he said I'd like to respond to – but primarily I rise mostly because I can. There were a lot of things said in that speech and also some things that were said earlier, and I kind of want to go over those.

You know, we on this side of the House don't believe that we are forcing the issue, forcing the play, like one of the members had said earlier. We believe that this bill is a response to a significant problem in Alberta, which is youth unemployment. That's a big problem. It's one of the things that we would like to see a resolution to, not exacerbate the problem by creating more layers of red tape and more burdens on employers in Alberta.

We'd like to attract more investment here, and to do that, we will make Alberta an enticing place to be, reduce taxes on corporations, and help people get into the workforce, climb the ladder of employment. You know, one of the problems we're trying to respond to is youth unemployment, which was at 11.6 per cent. There's this idea, for anyone who's applied for a job, of trying to grasp that first rung of the ladder, that you can't get a job without experience but that you can't get experience without a job. That's a real problem. We believe that this is a way that people entering the workforce can find those opportunities to get that work experience. We made this pledge during the campaign.

The Member for Lethbridge-West was making a point of quoting some hip hop lyrics, and I can appreciate that. Mind you, she quoted some more contemporary Jay-Z. I try to go back to the classics like *Reasonable Doubt* and *22 Two's*. It's a classic and should have gone

triple. You know, we walk it like we talk it on this side of the House. That is a commitment that we made, and we will do just that.

We will also try to ensure that we are attracting people back to Alberta to work. We want people to come here and start a business, do something great with their resources, do something great with their ideas, and tell the province, tell the country, and tell the world that Alberta is open for business, is a great place to be. I know, from knocking on doors across my constituency of Cardston-Siksika, that we have some of the hardest working people that I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. I referenced some in my maiden speech, and I'm honoured to represent them. But every day, every time I go and talk with them, they're asking us: please, help us; please help us find ways to be more successful.

11:50 a.m.

It's not our job here to create jobs for people. It's our job to help others come to Alberta, start a business, and create jobs for others to get into the workforce. I believe that Bill 2 does just that. So we have created this bill.

I speak against this motion, the reasoned amendment, because I don't believe that we need to go down that route. I believe that this is a good piece of legislation, and we should move forward with it.

With that, I will simply say this. On this side of the House and, in fact, in this province we may have 99 problems, but Bill 2 ain't one.

The Deputy Speaker: With 55 seconds left, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: I disagree with everything said. This bill will cause more people to be unemployed. It'll cause investment not to come here because 3 per cent GDP growth is not reasonable at this point in time. That's what this is predicated on. They need to fix that first, Madam Speaker, and they're not doing anything to do that. They're giving money away. We're going to have less money to be able to afford the many services and programs that Albertans rely on, and they're going to then take a look at cutting those programs. That's the contract they're making with Albertans, the one they're not talking about, the one they will issue as we get closer to having less and less money in the treasury as a result of their giveaway to corporations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: What time is it?

The Deputy Speaker: You're done.

Fun fact, hon. members: it's almost lunchtime. But that's not relevant to any of us here because it is still yesterday.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to also add my voice to the debate today on this amendment to the pick-your-pockets bill, and I certainly am standing in support of it. Certainly, what is indicated in this is that it is our view that this bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary. It really is an attack on workers.

I think that we've heard a lot of stories of our own journeys into the workforce. I certainly would like to share mine. I have a long story because I've been around for a few years. As a citizen of this province I have my perspective, you know, and as a woman I have my perspective, that's perhaps different than some of the other members here, and as a woman with my particular experiences, it

may be different from others, but I know that I'm not alone in this experience. So I stand very strongly against this pick-your-pockets bill because it is, again, an attack on workers. It's so important to hear the voices of citizens.

You know, I had my share of jobs that weren't great, as many people have. I grew up in a small town in northern Alberta, in the Peace River country, in Valleyview, and I didn't work in any kind of cool places like Red Lobster; I worked in the Esso truck stop. I actually started working as a waitress at the age of 12. Honestly, I was 12 years old, and I was waiting tables. But before that, I babysat for, like, half of what the minimum wage was, and the minimum wage at that time was \$1.35. And do you think I got tips? No, no, no. I was lucky if I got a buck. That was extraordinary: wow, I got a buck in tips. This predates the birth of many people in this Chamber, for sure, but it is my journey, the significance of what's developed me as a person and what's made me a strong advocate for workers' rights in this province.

Of course, this amendment calls on the government to take another look at this bill because it is not supporting workers; it's hurting them. I mean, this is sort of the fundamental reason that I got involved in politics, the extreme inequality we have in our province. We have the highest income gap of any province in Canada. We have, you know, the very elite, who have the most, and then a significant portion of the rest of us have much less. Of course, this again just follows along that path, keeping Alberta a place for elites and then the rest of us. It's a deep concern of mine.

As I said, I waitressed throughout my whole junior high and high school in this very small town. You know, there was no doubt that I experienced lots of harassment, sexism in that role as a waitress in a truck stop. Eventually I got tired of it, so I thought: I want to do one of the boys' jobs. So I pumped gas, and I liked that way better, and it seemed to be that just because of the different role I was in, I got more respect. I still made a low wage, but I appreciated having more respect as I fulfilled my job.

In '79 I graduated, and I moved to Edmonton. I went to university because I knew that I didn't want to stay in that small town even though that's what most of the girls in my class did. They got married early on, and they stayed in that town. But I had sort of bigger dreams, so I came to Edmonton, and I got my BA in political science at that time. I needed to support myself in Edmonton because, you know, I had to pay for my rent and tuition and all of that. My family didn't support me in that way. I paid for my own schooling.

I got a job at the ALCB. Does anyone remember what the ALCB was? The Alberta Liquor Control Board. I was excited because this was a union job, so I got a bit of a higher wage. That made a big difference. I had more rights. I had more benefits. I had more support. Actually, if you worked so many hours, after that you could take a product knowledge test, which I thought was cool. I studied and studied, and then my salary went up. That was very good. I was excited to be able to improve myself, be a better employee because I had more knowledge. This was a union shop. Of course, you know, we had more support.

Just before Christmas there was this new manager that came in, and he was known as the Axe Man. Unbeknownst to us – we were a bunch of struggling university students working part-time, trying to get our studies done – he called about 20 of us into his office. Of course, we were all the ones who got paid more. We were all the ones who'd taken that product knowledge test. He fired us for some kind of trumped-up thing. We had worked there for a long time in good standing. There were no issues, and then it was, like: oh, well, you did this one day; you did this. It was, like, horrific. I was just stunned that someone could get away with this. As a worker I was vulnerable even though I was in a much

better working arrangement than I had had as a waitress back in my small town. You know, here I was again, a vulnerable worker. I was going to school. How was I going to pay my rent? I was gone. I had to figure something out.

But I did eventually graduate with my BA in political science. I graduated in '82. Of course, '82 was sort of a bust time in Alberta, so there weren't any jobs. It was another really tough time for me. Again, I was super vulnerable, and now I had huge debt. I had a huge student loan hanging over my head. I worked in the nonprofit sector for a while, and although I liked the work, I got paid very poorly. You know, again, it paid very poorly, and it was shift work. This Bill 2 does talk about how some of the changes to the holiday pay, the general holiday pay, will impact shift workers even more so. I was a vulnerable worker, as workers working shift work are. We know that it's super stressful to do that kind of work. This is just another way to sort of pick the pockets of these vulnerable workers, and I certainly can relate to that, being one of those workers myself.

For about a decade I worked in the nonprofit sector, and I experienced poor wages, poor working conditions. You know, my work had meaning, and I liked it, but I just was frustrated because I was living in poverty. So when I was 30, I decided to go back to school because I felt like I just couldn't get a job that paid me decent and I needed to get a profession. Of course, I'd worked in the social services sector for this past decade, so I decided to become a social worker. I set my sights on doing that.

12:00 p.m.

But by this time I was a young mom, and soon I was a single mom. I lived in poverty with my young son, and as I said before, when I did my response to the Speech from the Throne, I did live in subsidized housing. That was, you know, a godsend for me. That meant so much to me and my son because it made a difference and it helped me to be able to go back to university, get my bachelor and my master of social work. Really, education was my pathway out of poverty.

Again, when I graduated, it was the early '90s, and that's, of course, when the Premier cut public programs in half. So a lot of people, myself included – not only was I looking for a job, but when I was in university, I used to get a grant. I got support because I was seen as someone who needed support because I was a single mom and, you know, it was difficult for me. I did get a grant, but as soon as the government of the '90s came in, that grant was gone. Again, I had to take out bigger student loans, and I had tremendous, tremendous debt. Of course, I graduated in a bust cycle. As I said, the programs were cut. There weren't many jobs, but eventually I did get a job, and I got a job in child welfare in the government. I was a front-line caseworker, and I worked to support vulnerable families, and I was a vulnerable family myself.

One of the things that happened early on was that, you know, we were all in training sessions or whatever and getting to know our colleagues who were starting at the same time as us. They had done a big recruitment from Ontario at that time because they couldn't get enough Albertans. So I met all these people from Ontario, and I met this one fellow. I think, over drinks, we were talking, and he told me what his starting salary was, and I told him what my starting salary was. He had an MSW, just like me. He had just the same amount of experience as me, and he was making \$10 K more than me, 10 grand more than me, when I was hired. And I was, like: "What? How can that be?" So I complained. Of course, HR looked into all of this. They saw it, and they said: "Yes, this is a mistake, but there's nothing to be done. Nothing can be done." I wonder why that was. Why would he get \$10 K more than me? I wonder about that.

Again, these are just vulnerabilities for workers, and we don't have equality. That's why legislation is so important, so that workers are protected, because even when they are, still there are advantages that are given to some but not others. That also informed my view as a young woman, not understanding why this fellow was getting so much more than me.

I guess one of the things that I just wanted to mention. You know, the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland spoke yesterday just about his journey in his career. He talked about being a farm boy and growing up in rural Alberta, and then through his connections on the farm he was able to get a job in the city, and it just seemed like he met person after person that promoted him along. It sounds like he's had a very successful time of it. But I wonder: what is the difference between him and me? I wonder. I think it must have something to do with gender, that I'm a woman. I'm a female, and I didn't have access to the old boys' network. He had access to the old boys' network. I'm not a privileged white male. I'm a woman, and I've had to make my own luck.

I put up with tremendous sexism along the journey, some I've just talked about specifically right now, and I know I'm not alone. I know my story is not unique. I know that this is a phenomenon that many women experience. So I just really want to expand the thinking of the members in the Assembly. Even though they may have had a clear trajectory to success in their lives, some people experience challenges. Of course, you know, gender is often a barrier to success; ethnicity may be. Certainly, we know that if people are of indigenous background, they have many, many barriers to their success in our society. Legislation that supports all workers, makes sure that they are supported, that's strong so that they can be treated with respect – you know what? Sometimes people aren't respectful. I certainly experienced that first-hand.

That's why I became a social worker, because I wanted to support people to overcome those barriers, to know their worth, to know how important they were. It doesn't matter where you come from, who you are; you have an important role on this planet. I am so grateful to my younger self, who saw that, and I've been able to live out my career supporting people. Now in this, you know, lofty position, being a Member of the Legislative Assembly, a representative for Edmonton-Riverview, I'm so honoured to again support the people of my community, to support Albertans, to support workers, which this bill absolutely does not, to have access to opportunities that oftentimes the doors are closed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Ms Glasgo: I'm very grateful, Madam Speaker, to be rising on 29(2)(a) to address some of the points brought up by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview. You know, I greatly appreciate her sharing her stories of her struggles as a woman in the workforce. Of course, as a young woman in this Chamber I do have to take some issue with some of what she shared, mostly because I do not believe my gender to be an inhibitor to my success. I also know that as a young woman in this arena, as a young woman in this Chamber, some of the best respect and some of the best opportunities I have been given are because of my male colleagues or my other colleagues of any gender. I'm actually suggesting that I had the ability and tenacity to do the work. I know that I have that because I earned the support of 65 per cent of people in Brooks-Medicine Hat in this last election.

So for the member opposite, Madam Speaker, of course, through you, to suggest that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is benefiting because he is male: I take issue with that because we all had to work exceptionally hard to be in this Chamber. I know from my own personal experience when I was door-knocking that there

were a couple of people who said to me: hey, little girl. I was called “little girl” quite a bit. I mean, I’m not exactly the tallest person in this Chamber, and, yeah, I’m visibly younger as well, so it’s just one of those things that happens to the best of us. But when I was at the door, I never let that stop me. It became a motivator for me, that somebody saw me and that maybe I couldn’t do it. It became a motivator for me to work harder and to get ahead. That’s exactly what I did. I kept knocking on doors.

I know that the Member for Banff-Kananaskis had some of the same issues. I’m not going to speak on her behalf because that’s her story to tell. But I know that as different members of this Chamber in different areas of the province we all had issues and all had things that we had to overcome. But the biggest thing here and I think the biggest point of contention between our United Conservative caucus and the women in our caucus and the members opposite is that we don’t see gender as an inhibitor to our success but as a different perspective that we share. I know that our Premier has worked exceptionally hard bringing people from a variety of backgrounds, including women, to this table and has actually made an overt effort.

I don’t have, obviously, the copies with me because I didn’t expect to be rising on this today, but in the *National Post* there was an article – and I’d be happy to table the copies later if that is necessary – where myself and a few other of my colleagues commented on the success of our movement in recruiting strong, talented, diverse women. I think you, Madam Speaker, sitting in your chair today, are a testament to that as well because it shows that our movement and this province really value and respect the opinions of strong, diverse women.

12:10 p.m.

Once again, I do take particular issue with the member opposite going after or implying, rather – sorry; I’ll use better language – that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland had somehow benefited disproportionately or unfairly because he happens to be a male. He worked very hard. I worked very hard. The Member for Banff-Kananaskis worked very hard. I’m looking at other members in the Chamber. We all worked hard. But me being a woman has absolutely nothing to do with that. I wanted to earn the support of the people around me, I wanted to earn their respect, and that’s exactly what I did, Madam Speaker.

How can we make sure that we continue this going forward? Well, I think that by creating jobs in this economy – to the point of the bill, when I was at the doors, it didn’t matter if I was talking to a man or a woman. Actually, I talked to one girl – and I say “girl” because she was 17 – and she was turning 18 I think it was, like, April 14 or something. It was awesome. She was going to be 18 on election day. We talked for a while, and, you know, she had some issues, and she was actually quite engaged. We were talking, and she said, “When did you get involved?” and I said, “Early on in my life.” We were talking about what our party brings to the table, and we were talking about getting out of university and how important it is to have a job.

I know that, for me, having a job really fulfilled me. When I was 14, I actually worked at the local hockey rink in Medicine Hat called the Kinplex. At the Kinplex, you know, I was slinging poutine. It wasn’t the most glamorous job in the entire universe, but I did it because it put gas in my moped – yes, my moped – to drive to lacrosse practice or to drive to wherever I needed to go because my parents knew that that would give me meaning. Actually, they were discouraging me from having a job at one point because they wanted me to focus.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there members to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Thank you very much. I am a bit at a loss for words, just hearing the previous speaker talk about the fact that because she’s had success, therefore there is no such thing as structural barriers in the world. I think there are women all around North America . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. However, we’re on the amendment, not comments of the previous speaker.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah, of course. I just . . .

Mr. Dang: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: A point of order has been called. Edmonton-South.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker’s Ruling

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on Standing Order 13(2). I believe the hon. member was about to get into why her comments, that were towards the bill, and comments that opposition members had made towards the bill – you had allowed those comments, showing that they were relevant to the bill and the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was about to move forward and discuss how those comments tied back to the amendment and so forth. I would ask you to explain why it was appropriate for the Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the member across in the government there to speak on these matters, but it is not such for the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, there’s been a lot of latitude that has been given throughout the course of this debate on all matters in this House. I will remind all members that there’s been an exceptional amount of latitude when it comes to comments and questions, which is very different than actually speaking on the amendment. So I’m just offering some caution again as we are all very tired and still operating on yesterday.

Will the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford please continue?

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I take your caution. I just needed to express my emotional reaction in the moment because it was quite a fascinating moment.

Debate Continued

Mr. Feehan: I do want to talk a little bit about where I was this morning before I came in today because it is quite relevant to the discussion of this amendment that has been brought forward. I had the pleasure and the opportunity to be at one of the high schools in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford and was able to join the students of Louis St. Laurent high school and Cartier McGee junior high. As many of you may know, they are together and often do events together in the same physical building. They had invited me to their year-end event and their liturgy and their assembly – a Catholic school, so the liturgy was there – which was quite enjoyable. They had a theme attached to the year-end event, which was typified by the final hymn from the liturgy, which was *Go Make a Difference*. That was the name of the hymn. The message from the presiding priest, Reverend Glenn, and, of course, the message of the whole liturgy and the year-end event for all of these

young people, almost a hundred per cent of whom I think would be under the age of 18, was that it is incumbent upon all of us to be responsible for the world in which we live and that we need to go out there and truly make a difference even though there are struggles, things, barriers that will stop us and sometimes pain or suffering that we will have to endure as a result of making the decision that we need to make.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

As I got up to speak, right at the end of the liturgy, I addressed the fact that we, in fact, had been here talking in this House all day yesterday, throughout the night, and right into the morning. I said that as we speak right now, there are people over at the Legislature that are talking about bills because they have that dedication. And I would say all of us. I didn't say that it was just the opposition side of the House, by the way, when I was speaking to the students. I tried to be a little nonpartisan. I said that members are here because they truly want to make a difference. I think that's probably why. Most people, I think, in this House would agree that that had at least something to do with their motivation to run for election. So here we are, trying to make a difference.

But then I said that I wanted to let them know a little bit about why we're staying in the House, that it's unusual for us to stay all night long and endure the sufferings, the pains of listening to each other endlessly for hours and hours at a time. So I said to them that one of the things that's very important and part of the reason for the filibuster that's going on right now is the fact that this present government is passing a bill, as we were talking to this group of perhaps 500 grade 7 to grade 12 students at one of the great Catholic schools here in the city of Edmonton, that right now there are people in the Legislature who are making the decision to take the minimum wage that you are presently allowed to earn of \$15 an hour and to reduce that minimum wage down to \$13 an hour.

I wish you were there – I wish you were there – to see the reaction of those 500 students who heard that phrase from me and the immediate response of boos and jeering that went on in that room, so much so that I literally had to interrupt it repeatedly to get them to calm down a bit and bring it back to the message of the day.

I didn't want to litigate this bill in that kind of a speech but, rather, to talk about the fact that things do matter, that the choices that are made by other people in this world will sometimes affect you negatively, that sometimes people engage in behaviours which are an assault on you or an assault on other people in the world, and that you have a responsibility to step up and, as the hymn says, to go out and make a difference. When these challenges come forward, it is very important that you take on that responsibility not only for yourself, I reminded them, but for all of those brothers and sisters around the world who will benefit from your having stood up when it was time to stand up.

So that brings me to this amendment. The whole point of this amendment is exactly that, that it is time, literally, for people on this side of the House to stand up, as you do when you speak. We stand up repeatedly, over and over again, to actually make a difference, to actually improve the lives of people who are more vulnerable than ourselves. This legislation isn't about anybody in this House. This legislation is about people who cannot be here to speak for themselves. It's about giving a voice to the voiceless, a challenge which I think is extremely important.

12:20 p.m.

I know that just before we went into the liturgy, I had a few moments to speak with Father Glenn and talk a little bit about, you know, what we were doing here and so on. He asked me a little bit about why I decided to go into politics. I just reflected to him about

a recent tragedy for the world, I would say, that a man by the name of Jean Vanier, a great Canadian who started the L'Arche communities, first in France and then subsequently here in North America, had recently died. I reflected on the fact that when I was 17, when I was just a young man at the University of Alberta, I went to listen to this incredible man speak about the need for all of us to care for others, to believe that the work that we do is most important when it is done for those who are vulnerable. He talked, I felt, to me personally about how important it was that we actually are proactive and have a preferential option for the poor, as was often said in the faith community. That's exactly what we're talking about today, a preferential option for the vulnerable and the poor.

I've got to tell you that I've stood in this House and talked about the fact that I sometimes find the internal workings of the conservative mind to be a bit chaotic and confused, and I point out when I see that chaos and confusion. Here I am looking at the bill that's being presented today and looking at the very first part of the bill, which is a reduction of the monies that are available to students who are trying to, first, establish themselves in the world, who are trying to do all the good that we all want to do to achieve for themselves a better life through self-improvement and moving forward.

As I look at this, I see a somewhat bizarre series of red tape measures included in this bill, that you will get paid \$13 an hour for the first 28 hours when school is in session but then \$15 thereafter. It's an interesting, Byzantine kind of concept there that somehow an event that is taking place outside of the work environment, has nothing to do with the job you're doing – that is, whether school is in or not – influences the amount you get paid for the work.

Now, I want to address again the notion, you know, about logical understanding of bills and why things are put into those bills. Why would you say that we're going to take something that has nothing to do with the labour that you put in, nothing to do with the circumstances of your contractual employment with the employer, and we're going to make that circumstance influence the actual remuneration that you get? How does that make any sense?

They used to do that in all kinds of other ways. If you happened to be a black individual in certain parts of the world in a certain era, you would get paid less than someone else. Again, an externality. It has nothing to do with the labour that you're performing, yet you would get paid less. If you happened to be a woman: we know that over the centuries frequently that externality, the fact that you are a woman, would lead to you getting paid less. But as a society we've come to the place where we have made the determination that those externalities are not logically attached to the work that is being done and therefore should not be used in the calculation of the remuneration for that work. That's just a basic issue of social justice, exactly what Jean Vanier was calling out to me to do, to pursue a social justice with a preferential option for the poor, and here we are going exactly in the opposite direction. We are actually introducing this Byzantine system of red tape where externalities are being used to calculate your value as a human being.

It was interesting. One of the things that Jean Vanier said when he first set up the L'Arche community – and I still remember this. I was 17 at the time. I'm a little older than that now, a few years, but I still remember. He said that people would call him up at the L'Arche community and say: "I understand you're setting up this group home for people with disabilities. I have a broken TV. Would you like it?" And he paused and said: "It's a fascinating thing that people would do that. They would call you and they would say: it is broken; it is not good enough for me, but because you are broken, it may be good enough for you. Giving broken things to broken people."

I think that's a profound statement. It's stuck with me all of these years. I can do the calculation. I'm 59 now, and that happened when I was about 17. Here we are again, taking people who are broken people, people who do not have a voice – they cannot vote in this situation – people who are vulnerable, and we're giving them broken things. That is something I just can't condone.

The set of rules around here is a little bit like a choose-your-own-adventure novel. You get paid one wage if you're in school for a period of time, then you get paid a different wage after a certain number of hours, but then, when school is out again, again an externality, you suddenly get less wages again. So you literally can have students who start a job in September, work for 28 hours at \$13 an hour, get moved to \$15 an hour, and then, when they graduate at the end of the year, get moved back down to \$13 an hour. If that isn't a series of red tape, I don't know what is, which is fairly ironic because one of the other bills that's in this House right now – in fact, there's a whole ministry dedicated to the reduction of red tape. Then the very second bill they put into the House is essentially quintessential, absurd red tape that would make John Cleese happy to read about.

I guess I'm very concerned here that this government really has lost faith with the youth. The reaction at Louis St. Laurent school this morning to hearing that just because of an externality, their age, they would be paid less was significant. The youth know that there have been a series of attacks. I would love to have at some point the Minister of Education stand up in this House and defend that and to speak about the fact that she is voting for a bill in which she is saying to all the people for whom she has responsibility that we have looked at you and we have valued you at 13 per cent less than we value other human beings. I'd love to hear that speech. I'd love to be in that audience to hear her make that statement to the people that she is responsible for.

I want to go on and talk a little bit more about who is going to actually benefit from having these wages go down. Who is it for? We know it's not for the youth. We know that taking money away from people is not going to make their lives better, especially the vulnerable people. There are only a couple of people that may benefit from this kind of decrease in wages to young people. One of them is perhaps businesses where the profit margin is so thin and so tight that being able to reduce the wages of their workers may . . .

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and I think he's mentioned very important points today that all members of this Assembly should take note of. It's important that we consider the stories that we continue to hear from members of the opposition on why this bill needs to not now be read a second time, and we need to consider having the opportunity to have more public consultation.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use a quote here. It's actually from *Hansard*. It's page 1060, and it was said on December 9, 2015. It's actually from the now hon. Minister of Transportation. He said:

For the government members, if they're tired of warming their hands, because that's what happens when you sit on them, to get up and talk and defend your bill.

Tell the . . . truth, not half the truth.

That's the whole quote. It's something that I think is very fitting here because we haven't heard from the government at all. In fact, I think one of the scariest things about us not having heard from the government on this bill is that this bill is a direct attack on workers' rights, whether that worker is young, whether that worker is old,

whether that worker works in Edmonton or Medicine Hat or Calgary. Wherever it is in this province, over 400,000 workers are being attacked right now by this bill.

12:30 p.m.

One of the biggest questions I will have and continue to have is: why does the government front bench and the backbench not support this bill? Why will they not get up and defend this bill? What do they think is wrong with it that they don't feel comfortable getting up and speaking to it? Perhaps the hon. Minister of Education could get up and tell us why as the Education minister she is okay with students having to drop out of school to make a living wage. I think that supporting a bill that encourages students to leave the school system is not what the Education minister should be supporting. Perhaps the Education minister is thinking that it'll save her a couple of dollars in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't mean to presume anything, but unless the minister is willing to get up and defend her position on this, I think that is going to be a significant problem as we move forward. It's a significant problem that there is an Education minister in this province who is not willing to have public consultation on whether students should have to drop out of school before they're able to have a living wage, whether students will have to actually leave their classes and no longer get high school credentials before they are allowed to make the minimum wage, especially for vulnerable young people, who may in fact have to end up going to a food bank or who may be in even more precarious situations than that and not feel comfortable going to a food bank.

It is very concerning to me that there is an Education minister in this House that is likely going to vote for this legislation and against this amendment, move forward with no consultation, and really talk about how young people are supposed to be the focus of her file, and then we see her supporting a bill like this and not supporting this amendment. That is something that is very, very concerning. It's an attack on youth, and when the Education minister in Alberta attacks youth, that is something that we need to really look at and say: is this the right minister at the right time? When we look at this, we've seen the Premier defend that, we've seen the front bench defend that, but we haven't seen them talk about why it's okay that this bill directly targets these young people, that this bill directly takes away those young people's rights, that it discriminates against young people.

It is absolutely the wrong thing to do. We've seen young people across the province speak out against it. We saw the minister of labour, who introduced the bill. He's made, I think, about 30 tweets in, apparently, his whole life, Mr. Speaker, but in two of them he's already been ratioed harder than I've seen a sitting MLA in the last four years. That's something that's very concerning. We have the Minister of Education then going forward and defending this and saying, "Oh, but young people don't need to be in school if they want to make a living wage," and she's supposed to run the education system. She's supposed to be the one encouraging students to graduate. Instead, she's going to support legislation that says: "Well, if you want to graduate, we think that you're worth a little bit less. If you want to go to school, we think you're worth about 13.3 per cent less."

Mr. Speaker, that's something that all Albertans need to be concerned about, not just young people. I think all members need to be concerned about it. It's something that is certainly a bad precedent to be setting here. Perhaps the minister wants to continue to sit on her hands and not defend herself, and perhaps the minister wants to just leave this be and not speak to the importance of this legislation and the importance of why she wants to take away these rights for young people. That's the minister's prerogative, but I

think it's a shame that we have a minister that refuses to get up and defend legislation they're going to vote for. It means that either the minister does not understand the bill that they are trying to vote for or they are wilfully negligent of that bill, and both of those are not something we want to see from anyone on the front bench but certainly not from somebody who has an obligation to our young people here in the province.

Here in Alberta we want to make sure we have world-class education with world-class graduates, and if the minister refuses to defend this, then we must assume she ...

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other hon. members looking to speak on this amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods standing.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to be able to stand in this Chamber today with my colleagues and contribute to this really important debate. The amendment that we have before us, that states that "the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary," has my full support. It has my full support because I have been talking to working people from all corners of this province about the impacts that Bill 2 will have on them and their families.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I really want to maybe draw a little heat out of this debate and talk about some of the real facts, the truth of what's happening here. I think it's really important that we focus back down onto that. In the papers the Premier is quoted as saying that this debate is necessary because of the NDP's radical changes to Alberta labour law. If radical changes were what we were debating here, that would be a different story, but we are not. We have a Premier who is trying to characterize this as radical changes when he's talking about taking away overtime banking at time and a half, which Alberta just got because we were behind the rest of the country. No other jurisdiction in Canada had a minimum standard – a minimum standard – that is there to protect vulnerable workers and those who rely on the minimum standards, where overtime banking could be done at straight time. It was not a radical change to move from straight time to time and a half. In fact, that puts us now catching up to every other jurisdiction.

Who does that impact, Mr. Speaker? Well, we know that 400,000 Albertans use overtime, primarily in the oil and gas and the construction fields but in many different industries. We know that when somebody does overtime, they deserve that premium because that is additional time and effort that they are spending away from their friends and family. This bill would take that away and move it from time and a half, changing that minimum standard. Again, let's remember that employment standards are there as the minimum to protect the most vulnerable.

So when we're thinking about who this change impacts, it's certainly not our overtime, Mr. Speaker, because we are not getting overtime although we are still in Wednesday and having a very robust discussion about this. This is protecting that minimum that is there for workers who probably don't feel empowered to go and have that conversation with their employer to talk about how, you know, in Saskatchewan and British Columbia and Ontario and Quebec and in every other Canadian jurisdiction workers are allowed to bank their overtime at time and a half, recognizing the premium when somebody works more than eight hours in the day or 44 hours in the week. This was not a radical change to Alberta labour law, which is the Premier's quote. That was just bringing Alberta into the mainstream.

I know, from talking to many, many Albertans and consulting widely on our original changes to the Employment Standards Code

and the Labour Relations Code, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of Albertans didn't realize they were out of step. That's what happens when legislation that is so fundamental to our working people, to our society doesn't get changed or updated on any regular basis, as was the case when we finally updated employment standards for the first time in 30 years.

An Hon. Member: How many?

Ms Gray: Thirty years, Mr. Speaker.

Just as a throwback to my friends who were here in the 29th Legislature, the last time the Employment Standards Code was updated, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* was in theatres, Mr. Speaker. *Beetlejuice* was in theatres. The movie *Rain Man* was in theatres. There were some really good movies. *Coming to America*: who remembers that one? The movie *Big*, with Tom Hanks, was in theatres, and of course I could never forget the Christmas classic *Die Hard*. When we were debating the changes to employment standards originally, I used references to a lot of those movies to really characterize the fact that it had been so long since these rules had changed and to really highlight how out of step Alberta had become.

We made changes like moving overtime banking to time and a half so that that minimum standard for most vulnerable Albertans was in line with every jurisdiction across Canada, and that is being characterized as radical changes to Alberta labour law. It is not radical, Mr. Speaker. It is fairness. It is fairness for working people, and it is making sure that when somebody is putting in the extra time – perhaps they work in a seasonal environment – they get the compensation.

12:40 p.m.

The change to take this away is going to cost working people. It will cost someone who is doing significant overtime during a busy period perhaps up to \$2,500 across 12 weeks. When we average these overtime amounts, it looks like for some Albertans it's going to cost 150 bucks a week. Mr. Speaker, 150 bucks a week is not insignificant when you add it up. It was not because of a radical change to labour law that we had this; this was Canadian mainstream. This is what every other Canadian gets.

Now, another example of what every other Canadian gets: every other Canadian – but not Albertans, potentially, after this change – gets Christmas as a statutory holiday. Alberta had been the only place where a worker could get no benefit for a statutory holiday because of some very complicated and convoluted calculations around holiday pay that were unique to Alberta. I can tell you again, Mr. Speaker. What are employment standards? They are the minimum standard. That means that the workers who rely on those minimum standards are our most vulnerable workers. Those are workers starting out, or perhaps they are workers who do not have depth and years of experience. What ends up happening when you reintroduce some very complicated and convoluted holiday rules that include distinctions between regular and nonregular working days and add in periods of eligibility and convoluted rules?

If in at least 5 of the 9 weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs the employee worked on the same day of the week as the day on which the general holiday falls, the general holiday is to be considered a day that would normally have been a work day for the employee.

Now, why do I read section 27(2)? Because this is exactly the kind of red tape and overly complicated calculations that employers asked us to remove, and we did in moving our employment standards to the same minimum standard as the rest of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you may or may not be aware that there are a lot of companies that under the old rules had actually invested in

HR management systems, in scheduling systems specifically designed to avoid paying their employees statutory holiday pay. In taking advantage of the rules that existed in Alberta before and that this government wants to bring in now, you could work at, let's say, a call centre – a call centre – and the scheduling software will set it up so that you did not in at least five of the nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs work on that day. The fact that we have had employers with scheduling software designed to take advantage of this loophole to give those workers less is shameful because every worker deserves a statutory holiday.

Let's bring this back down to the fundamentals. What is a stat holiday, why do we have them, and should Canadian workers get compensation for statutory holidays? Yes, they should. Stat holidays are common across the country. We all get them. Some provinces have as many as 10 stat holidays. Alberta has nine, which is right in the middle of the pack. But we will become the only place where someone may not get a benefit for that stat holiday.

In 2022 Christmas will fall on a weekend, and New Year's Day will fall on a weekend. I know that the members of the government like to talk about the impact when stat holidays fall on a Monday. But what happens when Christmas is on a weekend and New Year's Day is on a weekend? Workers get no Christmas benefit for that stat holiday, no money to buy Lego for their kids, no additional time off. I know, because it has happened to me, that employers who are providing the absolute minimum will give their workers no extra time off. In a year where Christmas and New Year's fell on weekends, I had the experience as a young worker of working that full week all the way until 4:30 on Friday – we got off a half-hour early because the employer was feeling generous – and then coming in again on the Monday.

Now, most employers in our province give generous Christmas time off. Our public servants get a week off, but let's remember what we're talking about. We're talking about the minimum standards for workers. That is what employment standards are.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interject, but I believe that with regard to the amendment we are focused more with regard to drawing investment to Alberta and stimulating the economy, so I would just ask the hon. member to ensure that she stays within the realm of RA1.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Really, what I'm talking about: bringing this back to the fundamentals really comes back to needing more public consultation. We had significant public consultation when we brought Alberta standards into the Canadian mainstream, and there has not been significant consultation about sending Alberta backwards, about sending it back. Now, the members opposite will talk about the election and 375 points within a platform, all of which had been studiously read by all members of Alberta's citizenry and thought about before they voted. As we look at each piece of legislation, it is our job to consider if this is the right move and if it will have the intended benefit. If the response to the problem is making sure that Albertans don't get time and a half for overtime and don't get any benefit for Christmas, I think we need more input from the public into that.

The public is watching what we say and do in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Our citizens are tuning in right now, and I hope everyone watching understands that Alberta will become the only place where you get no benefit for your holiday pay, the only place where Christmas could come with nothing additional, no time off. That is the minimum standard we are going back to. I hope everyone watching understands that we will be the only jurisdiction that goes from time-and-a-half overtime banking to straight time at a cost of \$150 a week to those who use overtime banking; \$2,700 in a 12-

week period is not uncommon in the oil and gas and construction industries. I think it's really incumbent on us that we talk about – further input from the public is necessary. That is why the opposition is up here talking about this.

Now, I had mentioned wanting to make sure that we had kind of the facts out. In fact, there's a quote from the Member for Calgary-Hays that he used when we were debating bills in the 29th Legislature. He said to us – we were the government at the time – tell the truth, the whole truth, not the half-truth. Well, Mr. Speaker, I find that the government has been telling half-truths about the impacts of what is happening within Bill 2.

I'd like to speak for a moment about the need for more public input when it comes to the change in youth student minimum wage, and I would like to talk about the facts. In my first response to second reading I did mention that the government in their news release chose to use numbers from March 2019 when April 2019 numbers had been out for two weeks. They used old numbers, Mr. Speaker – old numbers – because they liked them better, they told a slightly better story. That was, I would say, something that caught my eye, that I talked about here in the Chamber but I didn't think a lot about. Well, just recently the minister has put out a video talking about how there are 30,000 young people looking for work. He's misusing Statistics Canada data, because the number he's using talks about people who are 15 to 24. The policy he's talking about only impacts the people who are 15, 16, and 17. What we actually know, in April . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, under 29(2)(a) there is an opportunity for questions and comments, and I believe it was the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs who caught my eye.

12:50 p.m.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide some commentary on some of the things that I have heard this morning, especially from the member opposite, the former minister of employment. With all due respect to my colleagues, perhaps there isn't anyone in this Chamber that has the first-hand experience of employment standards of myself. In my years of employment in this province one of the jobs that I had the greatest privilege of doing for the people of our province was actually as an employment standards officer. I went on to be one of those who set up the temporary foreign worker program for our province, and then I went on to be responsible for the review of minimum wage, employment standards regulations in our province as a public servant. So I have got tremendous insight into all of the issues that we are debating today. I have had years of experience interacting first-hand in the field, across this province: employees young and old, from Smoky Lake to Grande Prairie to Edmonton to Wabasca. I have had the privilege of doing all of that work.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that the changes that we are putting forward are actually meant to – and it is not true. It is not true that we are removing the requirement for overtime. In the context of an overtime agreement it is not true. We must make a distinction between philosophical argument and intellectual argument on the substance. The members opposite have been digging deep into their philosophical understanding of how a society ought to be structured versus the substantive argument on the benefit of some of these changes we are to make for the sake of employment for our young people and our economy overall. Two different things. Two different things. It's okay for them. They can seize the floor and go on and on and dig deep into their philosophical underpinnings as the NDP. I get that. But what we must never allow them to do is to package that as a substantive intellectual justification for attacking this amendment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in the context only of an overtime agreement with respect to time and a half, what the bill we've put forward says is that if you work more than eight hours a day or 44 hours a week with that overtime agreement, nothing – nothing – impacts that. Section 3 of the Employment Standards Code makes it clear that employees and employers can enter into an agreement on whatever basis they want. So if they agree by employment contract that they are to earn more, that will be the case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:55 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Goehring	Pancholi
Ceci	Gray	Phillips
Dang	Hoffman	Renaud
Eggen	Loyola	Sabir
Feehan	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley	Notley	Sweet

Against the motion:

Aheer	Long	Sawhney
Allard	Lovely	Schow
Amery	Madu	Schulz
Barnes	Milliken	Schweitzer
Copping	Nally	Shandro
Dreeschen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nicolaides	Singh
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Stephan
Guthrie	Orr	Toews
Hanson	Panda	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Turton
Hunter	Rehn	van Dijken
Issik	Reid	Walker
LaGrange	Rosin	Wilson
Loewen	Savage	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 18	Against – 48

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Speaker: We are back on the main bill. Anyone wishing to debate this afternoon? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West rising to debate.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and a happy Wednesday to you. We are back in the time warp again and happy to be so, loving this opportunity to stand up for my constituents, for working-class people across this province, to shine a light on this attempt to pick the pockets of ordinary working people, in particular oil and gas workers that already saw, lived through, worked through the economic downturn and were just starting to get out of that recession that was caused by the downturn globally in the price of oil.

And lo and behold, another challenge to ordinary working people, but this time one that didn't happen across the Atlantic, over in the Middle East, or, you know, from a bunch of people that we

have no control over setting the price of oil. No. This time it is this government that is going after the very people who very likely, potentially, voted for them, ordinary working people looking for jobs, looking for improvement in the economy. Not in their ordinary household economy, Mr. Speaker – nope – that's not going to happen with this group of folks as they reach in and grab thousands of dollars out of the family budget for work that they did, for banked overtime that they earned doing work to build this province.

They will have less for their truck payments, they will have less for their Christmas presents, and they will have fewer resources to put towards any of their family priorities, all for an entirely avoidable public policy choice that is actually quite confusing, especially given what was said during the election campaign. During the election campaign we were all assured that there would be no picking of the pockets of ordinary working people.

Ms Hoffman: Say it again.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Ms Phillips: We were assured that that would never happen and could not possibly.

When we brought it up during the campaign, they said: "Oh, no, no, no. No. That is quite wrong, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. You don't know what you're talking about. You're utterly out to lunch." It turns out: nope; fully at lunch. Here we are at Bill 2. Now, it wasn't the first priority of this government, Mr. Speaker. That was a different bill, that I had nothing to do with, but it was the second priority. The second priority was to go straight into people's bank accounts and take away their hard-earned overtime.

Now, the second aspect of this bill and the reason why we've been here since Wednesday – and technically it's still Wednesday – is this just mean-spirited, complicated, irrational decision to take toonies out of the pockets of 16-year-olds, Mr. Speaker. To follow a 17-year-old home from work at a grocery store or at a cafe and rummage around in their pockets looking for toonies: that's exactly what this bill does.

Here's the other thing that is so confusing about this rationale. The rationale for this bill was that, oh, we have a youth joblessness rate. When they made the announcement on this, they could have used April 2019 data to justify this exercise in basically breaking into people's piggy banks and taking out every toonie they could find. They could have used April 2019 data given that the announcement was made after the Labour Force Survey data from Statistics Canada came out. They could have done that. No. No, they didn't. They used March 2019 data, which was more unflattering and painted a more incorrect picture of what is actually happening with youth employment rates out there. One of the other reasons they probably did that is because Saskatchewan's rate was far worse than Alberta's in April as opposed to March. That was a convenient sleight of hand that we saw on the part of the labour minister in justifying this bill, Mr. Speaker.

The other sleight of hand that we saw was that we saw the labour minister justify this piggy bank raid based on him saying that 30,000 young people are looking for work, but that is actually incorrect. Let me provide the House the service of a fact check this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. In actual fact, we're talking about fewer than 10,000 people that this might affect, people between the ages of 15 and 17. The numbers were utterly incorrect. The exercise of a simple Google search: I am happy to provide that to the minister in order that he might justify this particular public policy arrangement on actual, factual grounds. Certainly, I wouldn't want the minister

to continue to labour under incorrect notions. Let us, then, disabuse him of things that are demonstrably false so that we may all play from the same set of facts.

Now, one of the things that I think really is of concern to us around overtime is the amount of money that is going to be taken away from ordinary working people. We're talking about thousands of dollars, Mr. Speaker – thousands of dollars – not just in overtime but also in these changes to general holiday pay, which then put us offside other jurisdictions and do things like take away people's holiday pay for working on Christmas.

1:20 p.m.

You know, one of the things I do often on Christmas Day is that I take little gift bags, packages to people working on Christmas Day in Lethbridge. I have met with, talked with, sat with many of the people who are working on Christmas Day. It's one of the things I do to recognize that people in my community are going above and beyond, both in the public and private sectors. At a time when many of us are otherwise with our families, there are lots of folks out there who are just simply not. The idea that those folks wouldn't be eligible for holiday pay on Christmas Day, Mr. Speaker – I mean, this is Bill 2. An Act to Restore the Role of the Grinch in the Alberta Economy: that is how it should be renamed.

Speaking of families, I do want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the fact that my mother is up in the gallery with her husband, Mike.

An Hon. Member: Oh, my goodness. Did you just introduce your mother?

Ms Phillips: I did. I did do that.

You know, my mom was a small-business owner. My mom is an advocate for equality and therefore takes an active interest in Bill 2, as should all Albertans and as all Albertans are beginning to do, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this bill is now garnering a lot more attention because the opposition has done what we were elected to do, which is come to this House to provide thoughtful amendments to bills that we think are not quite fully considered, to query the public policy rationale for certain decisions such as to raid the piggy banks of children ages 15 to 17, for example, to scoop overtime from ordinary working people, taking away holiday pay from the folks who work as Santas in the malls, because that's absolutely what will happen, and all other seasonal workers, for that matter.

You know, I think what we have seen is a very motivated opposition to come here and represent our working class constituents, Mr. Speaker, and in a way that we are shining a light on legislation that may otherwise – or at least it was the hope, I think, of the government caucus that it would just slide through and that we would just let this one go. It's not the case. The people elected us to come here and do a job, and we will do it for as long as it takes.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a number of people were just out on the steps of this Legislature taking time off from their busy workdays, busy workdays that may be affected by this legislation, to protest other rollbacks of rights that are coming as a matter of priority, it seems, for this government. We've barely been in this Chamber a month, and we've already got protestors out on the steps of the Legislature. We've already got people talking about legislation and talking about the very severe impacts it's going to have on the economy, all because these seem to be the priorities of this government. Having hundreds of people committed to equality of all kinds standing on the steps of this Legislature was very, very inspirational to me this morning. I did see that the Raging Grannies

were out there. My mother sang with them, and that is as terrifying as it sounds.

Other people were also there, certainly people from Lethbridge who have driven all the way here, disrupted their working lives to come here and join us, to watch the debate on Bill 2 but also to ask very legitimate questions about this government's attack on equality rights either through the conversion therapy issue or the upcoming prohibitions and discrimination against LGBTQ youth, that is forthcoming in a subsequent bill. One of the people who has joined us is Dillon Hargreaves, who is up there, from Lethbridge, who's been an advocate – sorry. Devon Hargreaves. Dillon is Devon's sibling, and sometimes I mix them up even though they look nothing alike. Again, Devon has joined us all the way from Lethbridge. He's been a tireless advocate on conversion therapy, for equality of all kinds in southern Alberta. This is oftentimes very difficult work, Mr. Speaker, and there are a number of great Albertans who have spent hours working on a more just and fair Alberta, whether it's with respect to our labour rights and some of the issues that we see brought up here in Bill 2 or on other issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about this youth minimum wage issue and return to that. You know, we have here – I think it was just this morning or maybe last night. I don't know. It's all bleeding into one. The C.D. Howe Institute released a report on the topic of the youth minimum wage and the possible impacts to both the labour market and how business owners respond to this particular policy initiative. You know, I will be happy to table this document at the appropriate time, but let me just enlighten the House.

You know, with the C.D. Howe Institute, committed as they are to free-market economics and a very business-minded approach, I certainly have benefited from their analysis on other topics such as their analysis on Bill C-69, for example, or the federal approach on output-based allocations to the renewable energy sector. Those are two very recent analyses that the C.D. Howe Institute issued that were relevant to Alberta.

But here's another one, Mr. Speaker. You know, given that we are also discussing the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act, which is mostly just an act to create a committee and have some chit-chat time, here's what the C.D. Howe Institute says. It says, "The complexity of the compensation scheme can be a factor that discourages employers to substitute students for their current non-student workers." In other words, there's too much red tape in this suggestion for it to work and for employers to respond in the way that this government would in fact wish for them to respond. You can't make public policy based on wishful thinking.

Let's talk about some other wishful thinking around this youth wage. They allege, they assert that the idea here is that the youth minimum wage is going to be modelled on the Ontario system. In fact, there are a number of differences. There's quite a bit of daylight between the Ontario system and what is proposed in this bill. Leaving that aside for a moment, Mr. Speaker, the Ontario youth unemployment rate is higher than the national average. That's the thing that we're trying to emulate, I suppose? That doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about other Ontario policies that are also being proposed by this government; for example, massive cuts to the public sector in Ontario. The Bank of Canada in their latest forecast, that came out a couple of weeks ago: all of Canada's growth forecast is flat. Why? The Bank of Canada, those well-known radicals in the Bank of Canada, attributes Canada's softening growth rate to Ontario's fiscal policies of retrenchment and austerity, and the growth that the Bank of Canada identifies coming out of Quebec and British Columbia was not outweighed

by the dampening effect on growth that Ontario's austerity policies had.

Again, you know, trying to emulate policies, whether it's picking the pockets of youth . . .

The Acting Speaker: I would like to, prior to 29(2)(a), just take a quick moment to remind all hon. members of this House that guest introductions should be done at the appropriate time during the daily Routine.

Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank my hon. colleague for her comments, which I found very, very helpful in the course of this debate. She touched on a number of topics, but one that really struck home for me was when she was talking about red tape and the impact of Bill 2 to increase red tape on employers.

Now, she was talking about the challenge and complication introduced by having a separate youth minimum wage, the red tape that that adds for employers to now track birth dates for their employees, to track the school enrolment status for their employees, to be able to adjust on the 29th hour the amount of money that that employee is being paid, and all of the related complication. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we know from the news release issued in 1998 under Ralph Klein's leadership that reducing red tape was one of the reasons why the youth differential was originally removed, because employers were finding it burdensome to try and track this.

1:30 p.m.

We also know that in Ontario they find it administratively difficult and hard to enforce, and the Ontario employment standards teams have had many issues with employers paying too little when someone has already turned 18, when somebody is not a student. This is red tape being introduced.

Similarly, the new holiday rules, where you now have to track if somebody has worked five of the last nine of this particular day of the week in order to determine if they may or may not deserve holiday pay – I can make it easy for you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone deserves holidays. That's the way it should be.

And now this government is moving us to where Alberta will be the only place in Canada – the only place in Canada – where someone may get no benefit from a statutory holiday, putting us out of line with the Canadian mainstream, very similar to how we will be out of the Canadian mainstream when it comes to overtime banking, because nowhere else in Canada can someone use overtime banking at straight time versus time and a half without taking advantage of something like a flexible averaging agreement, which Alberta has. Alberta has the mechanisms to allow that flexibility that employees want without putting them in a position, which we know happened, which was why it was changed, where employers were forcing employees to use banking to avoid paying that premium for their overtime.

The red tape that my colleague was talking about I think is a really important aspect of this debate, and I think we can learn a lot from Ontario, we can learn a lot from important experts like those who are at the C.D. Howe Institute, and we can learn a lot from our own history. Take it from Premier Ralph Klein: having a separate youth minimum wage is a bad idea. It is overly complicated. Youth deserve a fair wage.

An Hon. Member: Who said that?

Ms Gray: Premier Ralph Klein in 1998, when they removed the youth differential, felt that the Leader of the Official Opposition had the right idea.

A single minimum wage was the way forward, and that was after extensive consultation. We had extensive consultation in 1998, specifically talking about that youth minimum wage. We also had extensive consultation just a couple of years ago as we brought employment standards into the mainstream. What we have not had is extensive consultation about taking people's overtime, picking their pockets, taking toonies away from 16-year-olds, and not giving all Albertans statutory holidays, in a way that is completely out of step with the mainstream.

I really want to say thank you to my hon. colleague and ask if she has any further thoughts when it comes to the fact that Bill 2 introduces red tape and that Bill 4, the act to reduce red tape, also introduces red tape. It seems a little odd, Mr. Speaker, and I'd love to know my colleague's thoughts.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague for sharing with the House some of the expertise that came from public consultation, because she undertook that for a long time. Now, the general holiday pay and overtime pieces are actually quite complicated. Employees must work 30 days of the last 12 months before a general holiday. Only employees who regularly work on a general holiday will be entitled to the pay. If the holiday falls on a day that is not normally a workday for the employee and they work that holiday, they're entitled to 1.5. If they do not work the holiday, they're not, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. If in at least five of the nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs . . .

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is standing.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Always a pleasure. I did get a chance to go home and get some shut-eye, but it feels like I never left. [interjections] Thank you. I appreciate that. One of the things that I hear often in this House from members across the way is: oh, you NDPers have no idea what it's like to run a business. But guess what? I actually ran my own business. So I'd like to tell you a little bit about the business that I used to run, and I'll put it in context.

When I graduated from the University of Alberta back in 1999 – you know, we talk a lot about our past when we're in the House, of course. Earlier, in the wee hours of the morning, I was talking about how I was actually born in 1974. For those of you who missed it – oh, I'm so sorry – it was such a riveting story, right?

Ms Hoffman: Is it in *Hansard*?

Member Loyola: It is in *Hansard*. You can read all about it. Read all about it.

I graduated from the University of Alberta in 1999. I did a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology, history, and Spanish. For those of you who don't know – sometimes, you know, I tell people, "Oh, yeah; I studied anthropology," and their reaction: it's, well, either Indiana Jones or that I dig up dinosaur bones. Indiana Jones is a little bit closer, but I definitely didn't do the dinosaur bones. That's more geology, or paleontology, I should say, but connected to geology. Anthropology is the study of human behaviour. Specifically, a lot of the classes that I took were on economic anthropology.

That being said, though, I remember a lot of friends during that time being, like: "Oh, what are you going to do with a bachelor of arts degree? You're never going to be able to find a job." You know what? It was difficult. When I ended up graduating from the University of Alberta, it was very difficult at that time. We were in a recession. I remember applying for hundreds and hundreds of jobs, and I just couldn't seem to land even an interview.

Now, I don't want to take us off topic too much, but one of the things that I did want to say is that when I was applying for jobs, I was using my full Spanish name, Rodrigo Loyola. Then one day a friend of mine was, like: "Well, you know what? You know what you should try? There are a lot of English speakers that simply just use Rod. Why don't you just use Rod?" Lo and behold, I started submitting resumés with the name "Rod Loyola," and – wow – I started landing interviews. Quite interesting. I don't want to take us too much off topic, but I just wanted to share that with people in the House.

Regardless, it was a tough time, and I'll never forget, because my wife at the time – we were recently married. We had just moved out of an apartment, and we moved into a house close to NAIT, and we didn't have a lawn mower. I remember that I had to cut the grass, and I remember thinking to myself: well, I've got to cut the grass, so I'm going to go and get a lawn mower. I started going around to garage sales in the area, and I ended up finding a lawn mower for \$50. I think it was probably close to the last \$50 that I had in my bank account. I remember going home with the lawn mower, mowing my lawn, and then sitting on the stoop at the front of my house with my head in my hands, thinking, "What am I going to do; I can't seem to find a job," incredibly perplexed.

But at that moment I remembered that my father always taught me that there's no shame in working with your hands. I went up and down the block asking people if I could mow their lawn for \$20. With the money that I made that day, I designed my own flyer, went to Staples, photocopied it, cut them up, and then I started delivering flyers all over the neighbourhood, to as many places as I could. I delivered them myself. Lo and behold, I started getting phone calls, and the business was born. I started mowing lawns because there's no shame in working with your hands.

1:40 p.m.

I say that because I come from a working-class background. My father, my mother were working-class people, salt of the earth people, people dedicated to building a good society. They don't want to have any more privileges than anybody else. They taught me that we should all be seeking to have the same opportunities, that we should live in a society where opportunities – no matter who you are or where you come from, no matter what your ethnicity, your orientation, everybody should have equal access to those opportunities.

Of course, the reality is not that way. I can't tell you the number of times I've heard from people's mouths that it's not just what you know; it's who you know. And I get it. We live in a society where people vouch for each other, and that's the way you kind of get a job. But we should be hired based on merit, for what we know and what our experiences are and what we can contribute.

I remember that when I ended up getting enough houses that I could mow the lawn at, I couldn't do it by myself. Remember that this was back in 1999, 2000, 2001. I hired three other people to work with me, and at that time – and I stress that I hired them to work with me, not for me, because I was out there mowing lawns with them just the same – I remember that they would come to my place, because I used to run the business out of my garage, of course, like many other businesspeople do. They'll run it out of their own home. I used to run the business out of the garage. All the

lawn mowers were stored in my garage. They'd show up at my place, and we'd all roll out together in my Chev Cheyenne. It was a one-tonne. I used to put a trailer on there. We used to put all the lawn mowers on the trailer, and we used to head out, and we'd have a wonderful day. Most days were full of sunshine. I'll never forget that I got quite the tan those summers. Yeah, beautiful.

We used to get out there, and I used to pay the people that worked with me back at that time \$15 an hour. The same minimum wage that we're seeking for people to get paid now, I was paying back then. So when business owners come to me and say, "Oh, my goodness, you know, I can't afford to pay \$15 an hour," I say to them: "Okay. Well, show me the books. Show me." At that time I was running my own business, paying people \$15 an hour for their time. For their time. I want to stress this because we would get up in my truck, and we'd go from one contract to the other, and just because we were sitting in my truck didn't mean that they weren't getting paid for their time. They were sitting in my truck, and we were on our way to the next contract. They were still getting paid for that time. It wasn't, like: "Oh, I'm going to stop the clock, guys, because you're not actually mowing lawns at this time. No. You're working. We're on our way to the next contract. You're working."

The reason why I mention this is because, being from a working-class background, I was taught that workers' rights matter. It's about fairness. I want you to think a moment about all of the rights that workers had to fight so hard for, not only here in this province or in this country but internationally. I mean, I'm not suggesting that any members on the other side believe this, but know that there were times when it was like a no-holds-barred playing field. Workers didn't have an eight-hour day or a 12-hour shift.

An Hon. Member: Child labour.

Member Loyola: Exactly. It was child labour.

Workers had to organize and systematically work towards making sure that their rights were respected. It was about fairness. I say this because I want to remind us all that an economy serves people – it's not the other way around, people serving an economy – and it's our duty and our responsibility in this House when we govern to keep that in mind.

After running my business for a long time – I did that for three years, and it didn't stop at lawn maintenance. Then people started asking me to do little contracts. "Hey, can you build me a fence? Can you build me a deck?" I was very lucky because my father and my grandfather before him were carpenters, and they taught me how to do a lot of these projects, working with my hands. For me, it was no problem to build a fence. I remember working with people who, you know, had never built a fence before in their lives, but they were working with me, so we'd get the job done. I would always make sure to pay them fairly for their time regardless of their experience.

Eventually I ended up selling the business because I wanted to get back into working in a related field, and I ended up going to work at the University of Alberta for University of Alberta International. Eventually, with time, I ended up getting more involved with the union at the University of Alberta and eventually got involved with working on the bylaws committee of the union, the Non-Academic Staff Association. Members from the union were, like: "Rod, we think you're a great guy. Why don't you run for vice-president?" I said: "Okay. Sure. I'll run for vice-president." I did my two years as vice-president, and people were really happy. They were, like: "Rod, why don't you run for president?"

An Hon. Member: Names.

Member Loyola: Thank you.

They were, like, "Friend, brother, why don't you run for president?" So I did. I was very proud to serve the members of the Non-Academic Staff Association as their president and to continue to work on making sure that their rights as workers were being respected by the University of Alberta through their collective agreement.

I want us to remember – I'll never forget being on the other side of the House and names being lobbed over to that side of the House. People used to call us – I remember hearing "union thug" one time if I'm not mistaken.

Ms Hoffman: Union hug.

Member Loyola: Union hug.

I distinctly remember hearing "union thug," "union boss," "crony" being lobbed at us. Let me tell you: in serving the members of the Non-Academic Staff Association as their president, I was there democratically elected by those members to represent them. Unions are an exceptional example of democracy.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, a five-minute question-and-comment period. I believe I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

1:50 p.m.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, these questions of labour relations and orderly labour relations that are within the Labour Relations Code: actually, there are some changes to these contained within Bill 2. I think the hon. member was moving towards discussing how those changes actually have practical effect for ordinary people. I wonder if he might continue sharing that view and that experience with the House in terms of some of the changes that are contemplated in this bill and how that may be problematic for ordinary working people going forward.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much to the Member for Lethbridge-West. That's exactly where I was going to go. That's what I was getting to. You know, you guys know me by now. I've always got a point. I've always got a point.

Whereas some people do have unions that actually fight for their collective agreements to make sure that their rights are respected, not all workers in our province have that privilege. Of course, Bill 2: what it wants to do is to actually take us back in time. Our government, the New Democratic government – and this is kind of a crazy thing – was only trying to put us on par with other jurisdictions across this great land of ours called Canada. It was only trying to put us on par, not anything more than any other place in Canada. It was just trying to get us to that basic and, I would say, very balanced, measured, pragmatic approach of getting us to where we could be where other jurisdictions in Canada are.

Now, here we see this UCP government wanting to roll us back, to roll us back in time: let's go back in time. And don't forget: that's the power that our Premier would love to have. He'd like to be a time traveller. He's quoted as saying that. He wants to take us back to – I don't know – the 1950s, the 1970s, to take us back in time when it comes to workers' rights.

I want to remind you all that unions are a great example of how democracy can function in the workplace, where you actually elect the representatives. They're not union thugs. They're not union bosses. These are people who are duly elected by the workers that they represent in their workplace. I'm proud to have served as a union president, and I worked very hard for the people that I was representing at that time, more than 5,500 workers at the University of Alberta. I'd like to think that I did it with integrity, with dignity,

treating everybody with dignity and respect, making sure to listen to each and every one of the members that had issues and concerns and making sure that if there were changes that I could make, I worked hard to get them done. It was about workers' rights.

So when this government decides that they want to take us back in time, they're actually taking rights away from working people here in the province of Alberta, and this is why I cannot support Bill 2. I want the members on the other side to actually think about this. I want you all to think about this. Is it really fair? Is it really fair that profits should trump workers' rights? Is that the kind of Alberta that we want to build and leave for future generations? Do you really want to take us back in time to where in the interests of profits . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford standing.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to have an opportunity to rise and speak to the main motion on Bill 2 and speak a little bit about my objections to Bill 2 and the concerns that I have in addition to some of the ones I've already previously addressed in speaking to the amendments. I'd like to be able to add, with my time I have available, about some of the underlying problems that I see with the bill. In fact, I would like to begin by tying that into a larger theme that I am increasingly becoming concerned about with this government.

In the short period of time that they've been government, they appear to have really lost faith with youth in our society and appear to continually be making decisions which are specifically and directly assaultive toward youth, those vulnerable people who we all as a society have a responsibility to protect and to nurture and to mentor. Instead, what I see from this government is a government that is hell bent for leather, as they say, to take away protections and rights of young people. We see that when we see the new education bill, which is undermining the safety of children in GSAs and protections against bullying within the school system, putting them in a place where they have to fight and challenge authority figures within their system in order to be able to have the right to meet and to talk about their concerns.

We see that when we look at the reduction of the minimum wage, affecting people directly and not based on the work that they do but simply on the reality of their age. It is an assault that we would not accept in any way on people described with any other personal characteristic. If we made the same decision that people who are left-handed would be paid less, then you would look at them and say that that's absurd. If we made that decision about people of another skin colour, another religion, another social group, any other defining personal characteristic as a reason for reduced wages, we would say that this is not only ridiculous but a violation of the human rights which we have worked over the last number of centuries in democratic societies to build up and to protect for all people. Yet when it comes to children who are most vulnerable, we jump right in and do it without any kind of concern at all.

I was struck as well a little bit by the presentation, the speech made by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, who talked about the challenges that she met as she grew up, working in a small northern community, Valleyview, in the Peace River country of Alberta and subsequently going to school, becoming a mother, finding herself to be unexpectedly a single mother, trying to go through school on minimum-wage jobs, where she didn't receive a lot of protections, didn't have those things that make it safe for a woman on the work site and provide the kind of income that is necessary for her to be able to appropriately raise her child and

subsequently other children she's had. She talked a little bit about the type of workplaces that she worked in and the type of work that she did, and it struck me that there's another piece to this legislation that I think is very concerning.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I've already spoken to the fact that I believe we have a responsibility as a government to have a preferential option for the poor, but I think that underlying that is a notion that people who have all of the advantages in society will do well. They don't need government to step in on their behalf. They'll find a way. They'll take advantage of the things that they have been given that other people have not been given, the extra bit of Monopoly money they got at the beginning of the game that makes it possible for them to win the game because they started in a different place than the other people who are playing the game. Because those people have those advantages, they don't need the same kind of protections. The people that do need the protections are the people who are vulnerable.

2:00 p.m.

I just was remarking on the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview when she talked about the types of places that you find these minimum wage jobs. Let's just talk a little bit about some of the places that I worked as I was growing up and the types of places that do have minimum wage jobs. Some of the places that I worked, for example, were at Camp He Ho Ha, a camp for people with disabilities just west of Edmonton, where we were paid, well, in fact, much less than minimum wage because we essentially were on duty 24 hours a day and paying minimum wage would have been impossible. Subsequently that led to me working in places like McQueen Road group home, for people with disabilities here in the city of Edmonton, to put enough money together to put myself through university or when I worked just after that in Edmonton children's receiving and detention centre, again, another minimum wage job. I started to realize that the people who were being hurt by these kinds of actions that are being taken in Bill 2 are people who are working with people.

Now, I know that if you leave high school at the end of grade 12 and you head off to Fort McMurray and you get a job driving a truck, you can earn a very substantial wage, much greater than minimum wage, so it's not those people we need to worry about in this kind of situation. Not only are you receiving a much greater than minimum wage salary, but you're also immediately invested into a union, which is protecting your safety, which is protecting your right to benefits, which is protecting your right to reasonable treatment on the job site. Those people are doing fine.

Who is it that's not doing fine? All of those people who are working with other vulnerable people: people who work in daycares, people who work in group homes, people that work in settings that are often nonprofit kinds of settings, where unionization is almost completely absent. Not only are they receiving less money, but they're also receiving fewer protections and supports from unions. Why is it that they're receiving that? They themselves in some ways are vulnerable because of their youth but also because of the people they are working with. At a daycare you're working with children. In a group home you're often working with people with disabilities or people who have been in the child welfare system.

It seems to me that this bill is an attack not only on the workers but on the people who are served by those workers. It's an attack on people who are already vulnerable. We don't have to worry about the folks that head off to drive that truck in Fort McMurray; they're well taken care of. But somehow if you decide that you want

to devote your life to working with people with disabilities, not only are you being attacked, but the very people who you are devoting your life to are being attacked because they're being told that their concerns are not worth while enough that the person who is working with them should be protected.

I'm very concerned about not only the reduction in minimum wage, which is often attacking people who are starting those kind of jobs – when I worked at Camp He Ho Ha, for example, many of us were young people who were entering into the workforce and getting those kinds of jobs – but also I noticed that the provisions in this bill regarding the formation of unions, very specifically, are going to have the effect of reducing the likelihood of somebody having a union. We know from the example from British Columbia that when they moved away from card certification, the number of actual unions that got formed was reduced significantly and then increased again by about approximately 19 per cent when they returned to having card certifications. We can see that the intent of this section of the bill is actually to decrease the likelihood of unions.

It's a suppression of unions. That's the underlying intent. It's not about democracy. Democracy is still there. People have the right to sign the card or not sign the card. This is about a government trying to put in structural barriers to prevent people who work with vulnerable others such as people in nonprofits, in daycares, in summer camps, in group homes, and so on from actually achieving unionization. It's saying: you don't have power; therefore, we are going to put in a barrier to prevent you from achieving any power because we like to keep you in that powerless place.

I can tell you that that very much concerns me. It concerns me that a whole bill would be created to disenfranchise segments of society, largely segments of society that are already disenfranchised by other structural barriers in their lives. Structural barriers like family violence and family dysfunction that cause a high school student to say: my parents cannot support me in the way that I would like to be supported, perhaps not even to the point of being able to feed me properly, so I'm going to find a job in order to be able to take care of myself and perhaps even contribute to the family. That person is now the focus of a concerted attempt to create a structural barrier for them to overcome the problems that they already experience in their life and family circumstances.

We have a young person who is leaving a traumatic home life, heading out on their own because they simply can't live at home. Perhaps they are a victim of child sexual abuse, an area I worked in for many, many years, as the Speaker might know. Perhaps they are a child who came out as gay and was rejected by their family, and now they're heading out onto the street because their family is no longer willing to support them. For those people who've already experienced those kinds of structural barriers that prevent them from doing well in society, we want a society to come in and to move in and to help them to overcome those barriers, not to impose new barriers on them.

We should have a society that looks at those vulnerable people and says to them: "You already have suffered enough. We are going to find ways for you to be successful." Instead, what we do is we actually create a bill where we say to them: "Drop out of school. You'll get a couple extra bucks. You'll be able to feed yourself. You'll be able to leave that abusive family situation and take care of yourself." That seems like a crazy person to pick the pocket of. That seems like a terrible time to demand a loonie or a toonie.

We should be going to those people and we should be saying to them: we are going to provide ways for you to be successful, not

encouraging you to drop out of school. The research is really clear. If you continue in school, over your lifetime you will have substantially more resources available to you, primarily wages. It goes up specifically with every piece of school achievement that you have. We know that if you graduate from grade 12, you are likely to have a significantly higher wage than somebody who does not graduate from grade 12. We know that if you go on to some postsecondary, if you go to a trade, if you go to a university, if you go to a college, then your income will go up.

What we've done now is that we've created a structural invitation for defeat. We've invited these people who already have the barriers of abusive homes that they're trying to leave to struggle against not only the negatives that they grew up with in the first 16 years of their life but to add onto that the invitation to not engage in those kinds of activities which will help them to overcome.

Society in part is judged by the ability of people to move from one socioeconomic bracket to another socioeconomic bracket. It's one of the measures of successful, modern democracies. When people can be born into humble circumstances and through their efforts move themselves up to another socioeconomic level, we can say that society has provided them an opportunity to make the best of who they are. That is something that I think is quite noble, yet we are now creating a bill which actually puts in structural barriers for them to do that, which prevents them from earning the wage they might earn, which prevents them from joining a union.

2:10 p.m.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I saw the Member for Edmonton-Decore rising first.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've always enjoyed the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. The thought that he brings to debate: it's not some kind of random musings, you know, the world according to somebody. He does his research. He comes with the facts and his lived experience and very eloquently gives us information that we, in my opinion, with this bill right now, must very seriously consider.

We're faced with, I think, two decisions with this information. We can listen to it and we can take it very, very seriously when we're talking about whether we should move this bill forward or not or, potentially, we can lie to ourselves and pretend he didn't just tell us this. I think that second option poses a lot of problems for us.

I was hoping, because I know that probably the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was closing in on his finishing thoughts, that he would share those with us so that we're able to make an informed decision.

The Speaker: Thank you for your brief question or comment. It's noted.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for the opportunity to address a little bit more of what it is that I'm trying to bring to the attention of this House.

In summary, the thing that I think is most concerning here is that this bill appears to be an attempt to take away whatever voice is left for people who already, in many ways, are voiceless. It takes power and privilege away from people who are under the age of 18 by taking away resources that are their due right for the work that they have contributed to, whatever their employment is. It takes away their right to join in a union, which has at its very core the purpose of giving a voice to workers and allowing workers in the workplace to be there not just as cogs in a larger machine but as people who

have value in their own right, people whose lives matter on an individual basis.

The purpose of unions is to allow workers to be able to be represented in a work setting not simply as serfs or tools to be used by a corporation or a business but, rather, to be people who can express their own needs and satisfy their own needs because they themselves have value intrinsically. The union allows them to bring their voice to their employment situation. Without unions we would be back in a pre-industrial British time where some people were successful and other people were not and where those who were successful could use the less successful for their own benefits and not provide anything in return. That brings us back to a time of Charles Dickens, of *Oliver Twist*, when people's health and well-being were not cared for, where their desire to create for themselves a good life was not a concern.

It's only because of the creation of unions and the work of those unions to stop the kind of abuses that were occurring to front-line workers that we have been able to create a society in which there is nobility in work that before was seen as the work of a serf or of a chattel. At a time now when you have a trade – you're a carpenter, an electrician, a stonemason – that work in and of itself has value, and you can have pride in being in that profession. Other people will know that your work is important and will acknowledge it by allowing you to have a voice in your work setting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are back on the main bill. I see the Member for Edmonton-Decore rising to debate.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to you. It's a pleasure to be here to continue what has been a very lengthy discussion today on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I touched on this a little bit earlier, about making things happen, just forcing it on through, which, as I'm sure I explained a little earlier, isn't necessarily the best approach because sometimes in that blind quest to move ahead, you miss a lot of other things going on, and it generally tends to create a lot more problems than you first anticipated. I think we have some significant problems with this.

I had a chance to rise a little bit earlier today, speaking about an amendment to tap on the brakes a little bit here: "Let's think about this. We need to talk to some of the people that this affects. It could help us make better informed decisions." Certainly, I'm very grateful for the fact that Kieran Quirke is here in the gallery – he's a very staunch advocate for workers' rights – listening very intently because I'm sure that there's probably some information that we could have gleaned from him in terms of this bill and how we could have made it probably a little bit more fair for workers.

When we talk about fairness, I can't imagine how picking their pockets can be fair when we say to our young emerging leaders in this province, the ones that will be inheriting the things that we do today: "I'm sorry. We really do appreciate your work, but it's worth \$2 an hour less simply because of your birthday." I find that very, very disappointing. Again, I think I spoke a little bit at length about how we should have been talking to these people. I know that in the last election they were 17 and they weren't voters, so it didn't kind of really seem like their opinion mattered. I very highly disagree. I know, Mr. Speaker, that with the number of schools I've gained, from 21 to 26 now, I interact with my students on a very, very regular basis because I found that the input that they give me actually is able to help me make some very good decisions moving forward as their MLA.

I touched a little bit around the liquor server differential wage and how that has the ability to very disproportionately affect what are

predominantly women in that industry. I really, really take exception to that, because I had mentioned a scenario that I had witnessed in terms of how they were treated, what they were being told to solve the issue. As you can imagine, I very adamantly disagreed with that approach. It's amazing how fast time flies, and I didn't get a chance to talk a little bit back then during that amendment to tap on the brakes, to take that pause, to slow down here for just a second.

General holiday pay: oh, my goodness. I was thinking to myself: can you imagine if Christmas landed on a Saturday? I don't know if Santa Claus is going to have to stay home now or something because he's not going to get paid overtime to deliver those presents. You know, when I was looking around – it's always helpful to do a little bit of research; the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was very, very clear on that – I noticed that it seems like there's no other jurisdiction that does this.

2:20 p.m.

I'm really not sure what the point that's trying to be achieved is by setting those conditions up. For our workers, again, when they choose to work a holiday or choose to work overtime, this is a personal sacrifice away from their family, away from their friends, and, like I said, just their plain old free time. It's these extra premiums, this extra pay that in a sense compensates them fairly in order for them to come to work, put in the hard work, and make sure that the employer, their business, is successful moving forward.

You know, I also, I guess, question a little bit why we would want to take this money out of their pockets. There was some discussion earlier from members in caucus around Red Lobster and whatnot. Mr. Speaker, I'm feeling a little left out because, unfortunately, I was never working at Red Lobster. I did work at Dairy Queen. I'm hoping that maybe there are some other caucus members here that may have done that in their former lives, and maybe we can connect and talk about that a little bit.

You know, getting paid that money, be it general holiday pay or overtime, I'm going to be pretty bold here and say that those folks are probably not taking that money and squirrelling it away in a Cayman Islands account. I just don't see that happening. My gut feeling is that they take that money and not only do they spend it on the things that they need, which could be food, clothing, and shelter, but they also spend it on the things that they want. The last time I looked, it's things like the stuff we need but also the stuff that we want that moves our economy. It creates those businesses. Somebody is willing to take the time to step up to offer that good or that service. Those people are willing to freely take money out of their pocket and give it to them, but if they don't have that money, Mr. Speaker, they're going to have a hard time supporting that business.

I know I'm very grateful for all the different businesses that are in my riding of Edmonton-Decore, nicknamed the shopping district. We have three major malls, a lot of restaurants. I would highly encourage you, during your time when you're here in Edmonton, to come to Edmonton-Decore. We've got some great restaurants. The food is fantastic, and I guarantee you'll love the service, Mr. Speaker. It's because of those workers that are there that are the face of those businesses, and they're working so hard for those customers so that that business is successful.

You know, from time to time we do have maybe the odd bad actor. As I was mentioning a little bit earlier around the liquor differential, when you have conditions in a workplace that maybe aren't so favourable, those individuals will sometimes seek out – and here's where I always prepare everybody because I'm going to say that word again, “union” – a union because they know that

collectively they are able to stand up and change those conditions for the betterment of all, not only the employees but the business, too. When you have a happy employee, when they're paid well, treated with dignity and respect, given a good paycheque, they will promote all by themselves for free the business that they work at, a great, great exchange.

You know, we've had some of our members touch on this a little bit, and I want to clear up a little bit of a misconception that I've heard over and over again when legislation was brought in around the card check. As soon as that was brought in, everybody lost their mind, Mr. Speaker: “You've taken away the secret ballot.” Let's see if I can be very clear about this: “No, that didn't happen.” What happened was that there was an extra component added, where if you have signed up 65 per cent of the workplace – I should be very, very clear here. I have participated in organizing drives. It's not an easy task to get to that level. So when you can't, that 40 per cent threshold is still the secret ballot. It's always been there. It's never gone anywhere. I just wanted to take a quick moment to clear that up, hopefully, and maybe people can put some of that rhetoric aside.

I think we have some very serious concerns here around this bill in terms of what everybody else is doing, things like taking away holiday pay. Nobody else is doing that, Mr. Speaker. Again I mention that, unfortunately, the odd time we do have bad actors in the employment sector, and they are going to take advantage of people. But you know what? Thank God there are unions around. Hopefully, they'll be able to stifle that kind of behaviour a little bit.

But asking our current youth to take a \$2 pay cut when potentially they could be out on their own, supporting the things that they're doing – I remember entertaining discussions back when I was at my former employer. At the time, you know, the market wasn't the greatest. Business had dropped a little bit, and the company did come to us and say: “You know what? Something has to be done, and we're asking you to take a big wage rollback.” One thing I do remember about that was the promise: “When things get better, don't worry. We'll make it up.”

Mr. Carson: We've heard that before.

Mr. Nielsen: Yeah. I did hear that.

Very clearly, then, I continued to hear it for several years after that. I believe it was something like 12 to 15 years later before we finally sort of caught up through negotiations to where we had left off back when we took that rollback to save the company, which back then was the only profitable division of the entire company, which was a little bit odd. The point was that people were looking at that wage rollback with a lot of concern.

What is the difference between, you know, myself back then, a young man with a growing family and children, being asked to take – well, back then it was over a \$2-an-hour wage cut. I don't see what the difference is between my concerns and the concerns of a 17-year-old. I think they are just as valid when it comes to that kind of drastic, drastic change in a wage scale.

I'm very, very disappointed with this bill. I remember very clearly in the last Legislature how we were constantly pointed at, our government, for apparently not consulting. Over and over again: “You guys didn't consult. You didn't talk to people.” Yet here I am seeing legislation from what I thought would be the government who was going to prove how to do it properly, Mr. Speaker. They, you know, rightfully or not, pointed out all the mistakes that were done, and I thought: “Well, okay. They're going to step in. They're going to show us how to do it right, how to treat everybody fairly, how to bring forward legislation that balances

everything out.” Then we see Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, again, unfortunately, just very, very disappointing.

When we look at the amount of money that hard-working women and men, be it in the oil and gas industry, in the construction industry – like I said, I had two friends give me a call as soon as this bill was released, and I find it odd because, as I had mentioned earlier, our political views don’t necessarily line up. Some of the conversation, like I said, Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to repeat because I’m almost absolutely certain that you would rule it unparliamentary language, but they were not happy. They were asking me if this really, truly was coming forward. I, unfortunately, had to tell them that, yes, this was being proposed, that your overtime – you know, this one friend, who’s an electrician, does a lot of overtime while he’s up in Fort McMurray. Not happy about losing that money.

2:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. I would just note that I’d welcome an invite to Edmonton-Decore, and any time you want to take me for dinner, I’d be more than happy to visit some of your establishments.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has risen.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in listening for many hours now, I would like to remind the members that one of the reasons why we were so specific in this last election with what we were looking for as a mandate from Albertans – we put together a 117-page platform commitment, where we were able to showcase 375 what we felt were good ideas for Alberta, good ideas to be able to bring back jobs, jump-start the economy, and to be able to right the ship in Alberta. We did this for a specific reason. We did this so that Albertans would know what they were going to be voting for, not voting for an NDP government, like in 2015, that said one thing and then went and offered the largest tax grab, through the carbon tax, that Albertans have ever experienced.

Now, this is interesting because we were very clear with Albertans what our plan was. We were very clear, again, by design, to make sure that Albertans knew . . .

Mr. Dang: That kids are worth 13 per cent less.

Mr. Hunter: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, who continues to heckle, needs to remember that we have listened very patiently to that member’s pontification in this House, so I would hope that he would be willing to provide me with the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, what we’ve seen over the last many hours is the NDP rejection of democracy, the NDP rejection of the majority of Albertans making the decision about the direction that Alberta should take. So they can talk about their view of Alberta and the way that it should be all they want, but the truth is that Albertans made a decision on April 16 and told us the way that they would like us to go. All that we are hearing since yesterday, very early, is their iteration of the way that they would like to see Alberta go. It’s unfortunate that they reject so wholly a democratic process that is centuries old in this province and in this country, in fact in the world.

We are in a situation now where we continue to allow them to work through the process of being able to give us new evidence of why Bill 2 is not the right way to go, but in reality . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I might just encourage you to allow the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction to have the floor briefly.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the opposition members have an opportunity to be able to show to Albertans that they respect the democratic process in this province, yet they are fully rejecting it. I do believe that Albertans, all eight of them that watched through the night, will take note and make sure that the NDP stay where they are and where they deserve to be, in opposition, perpetually because of the anger machine that they are. This is something that we have continued to see, and Albertans rejected this in the past.

I have had the opportunity of being able to listen intently, and I’ve heard the arguments over and over and over again, the same arguments, and the redundancy in their arguments shows the depth of their conviction. The arguments are completely redundant, continually, over and over again repeating the same thing only to be able to filibuster and to be able to stop the progress of this government.

Now, they know full well – they were on this side of the House not too long ago – that they had the opportunity to be able to bring forward their agenda, which they received from Albertans on May 5, 2015. Now, they were fully willing to accept that they received that agenda and that mandate yet are willing to reject the mandate that we received in this House. The hypocrisy of that, Mr. Speaker, is unbelievable.

The Speaker: We are back on the main bill. Are there others wishing to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about Bill 2. My dear friend Christine was watching our debate late into the evening, and now she and her two youngest children, Meleah and Austin, are watching again. I want to mention that her husband, Ian, is retired air force. Her two older children are currently members of the Canadian Armed Forces. As we stand here in this House and freely debate, I can’t help but reflect on the importance of citizen engagement and the ability that we have as opposition to freely express our opposition to the government.

As Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I’d like to take a moment in this House and commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day and acknowledge those that fought for our ability to engage in the very democracy that we are speaking to today. That historical 24 hours involved 14,000 Canadian soldiers who landed on Juno Beach or parachuted into Normandy. Our soldiers broke through the beach’s defences in less than two hours, and by nightfall they had reached as far as 10 kilometres inland, the highest of any division that landed on June 6, 1944. Many soldiers lost their lives that day and many more in the battles that would follow in Normandy. The invasion is now recognized as the greatest military operation ever executed.

To honour those who fought and died in Normandy, Canadian veterans created a museum called Juno Beach Centre, located on Juno Beach, in 2003. The world can now learn of the incredible Canadian sacrifice made on Juno Beach in Normandy, where many Canadians landed 75 years ago.

The Victoria Cross is the highest military honour one can receive in Canada and the Commonwealth. Only one was awarded within Canada for the invasion of Normandy. Mr. David Vivian Currie of the South Alberta Regiment, now known as the South Alberta Light Horse Regiment, received this honour. It is because of the resiliency, determination, and, for so many, the sacrifice made by our soldiers that we are able to be here today and participate in this Legislature. To those that are no longer with us, to the veterans across this nation, to the current members who perpetuate the work of soldiers before them, and to the many, many families, thank you.

I would just like to thank my members for the standing ovation that was given to our soldiers who have come before us and who have provided the freedoms that we are so able to enjoy today in this House. To be able to debate freely is such an honour and an appreciation by our members. It's an incredible privilege.

Back to Bill 2, Mr. Speaker, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. More appropriately, we've been calling it, on this side of the House, the pick-your-pockets bill. We're standing up for Albertans over here, and that's why we are opposed to the legislation that's being proposed the way it is.

2:40 p.m.

When we were government, we made sure that Albertans had modern workplace laws that respected working people, that set modern standards and ensured that Albertans were treated fairly. After decades of inaction, hard-working Albertans finally had the same rights and benefits as every other Canadian. We followed through on our promise to phase in a \$15 minimum wage so people didn't have to go from their jobs to the food bank. We made workplaces more family friendly. We introduced job-protecting leaves and improved maternity leave and compassionate care. We put a lot of time and effort into studying the impacts of the minimum wage.

Earlier this morning we heard concerns about the bill progressing, and we've introduced an amendment that was asking the government to stop. We felt that enough consultation hadn't occurred with Albertans. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that was voted down, so we're back speaking to the main bill. We just want to continue to advocate because we know about the impacts of consultation. We took that information, and we were able to ensure that we were putting more dollars into the pockets of hard-working Albertans who live here, who work here, who spend their money here. We looked at studies finding positive effects of raising the minimum wage. I hope that our opposition has consulted and has looked at impacts on women, on consumer spending, on health, on poverty, and more.

You heard me, Mr. Speaker, talk about my story this morning. You heard me talk about the experiences that I've had as a social worker, seeing first-hand and living first-hand the impacts that poverty has on all aspects of people's lives. This bill, unfortunately, is taking money out of Albertans' pockets. Taking away their ability to have their overtime at time and a half is shameful. Unfortunately, we know that most of the people that are impacted, in poverty as well as working in minimum wage jobs, are young people, women, and children. We know that poverty has a huge impact and that there's a higher rate of illness, lower education, limited housing availability. That list just goes on.

On this side of the house we believe that Albertans, young or old, deserve equal pay for equal work and that rolling back the minimum wage for young people demonstrates an absolute lack of compassion and a lack of respect for young workers. The value of your work should depend on the effort and the skill that you put into it, not the year that you were born. The UCP is also proposing to implement a \$2 – oh, sorry. I talked about that, the \$2-an-hour wage cut to students between the ages of 13 and 17.

However, it would only apply if they were in school. If they work more than 28 hours in a week, they must be paid the general minimum wage for every hour beyond the first 28. During breaks and summer holidays the youth rate would apply to all hours worked. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this would lead vulnerable youth to choose to drop out of school in order to make a higher wage, which is very concerning. Again, you heard me talk about some of those vulnerable youth and, specifically, young parents. Like I mentioned earlier, as a single young mother myself – having

worked with young parents for several years, I spoke to the negative impacts that this legislation would have on these young people and their families. Looking at all families, our government knows that we need to be able to support families, and proposing legislation that has a direct impact on their pocketbook is harmful, and it's shameful.

The other piece I talked about this morning was, again, the impact on those that are in the service industry and the UCP proposal regarding a liquor server differential wage. We believe that the minimum wage needs to be guaranteed for all hard-working Albertans, regardless of where they work, and that the government shouldn't be creating different tiers for workers. I talked about knowing that tips can't be considered a stable income. Their tips may vary, night by night, shift by shift, with the location of where they are in the province. It simply just doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker. You can't rely on an unstable source of income. When the UCP says that all servers make up the difference in tips, I'm curious how they can guarantee that.

We talked a little bit this morning about overtime. We know that the pick-your-pockets bill will take your overtime, steal your holiday pay, cut your holiday pay to pay for their big tax gift to corporations. The Premier's pick-your-pocket bill will impact roughly 400,000 Albertans working overtime to care for themselves and their families. Albertans in oil and gas, construction, and the skilled trades will be hit hard.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak to this first-hand. My oldest son is a fourth-generation journeyman insulator and has worked in the oil field for several years now. We know the impact that this is going to have on our family, on so many families across this province. There are Albertans that are working to a project deadline who often put in the extra hours to get the job done and then take the paid time off later. If you're an oil and gas worker making average pay, putting in 10 overtime hours every week on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours in paid time off. The difference between banking that pay at time-and-a-half pay versus straight time is over \$2,500. That's quite significant. It's a huge difference for working people. We're talking hundreds to thousands of dollars for people going above and beyond in the workplace day in and day out.

What happens when the workers accumulated overtime with the understanding that they were going to receive 1.5 for each overtime hour? It's not taught to students or non-unionized workers to negotiate their rights as an employee. Who is to sit with workers and explain that they have the right to request their overtime to be paid out, Mr. Speaker? How will employees respond to that negotiating process? Even if they allow that discussion to take place to begin with, there's a power dynamic at play in these discussions no matter how you frame this. Employers' bottom line profits are affected if they pay out overtime. Will they be open to doing so when they know that by paying out overtime, it will be at 1.5 hours for each hour worked versus time in lieu, which is 1 hour for 1 hour?

The workers' time is not valued as it was in our legislation. Workers are at the mercy of employers' discretion to honour their important work that generates those profits for the employer. How can the members sit across there, vote this through, look Albertans in the eyes, and say: your work is not valued? Many of my constituents work in the trades. Their overtime is what has helped them and their families in Edmonton-Castle Downs get through the economic downturns. When I was at the doors, I heard loud and clear from all constituents that overtime was the most important issue that crossed all demographics. I heard many times that the previous election reflected Alberta's wishes for the future of Alberta. Well, Edmonton-Castle Downs voted overwhelmingly against losing their overtime hours, losing their value.

I now have constituents coming to my office with fears now that this has been introduced. "What will this mean for me? What will this mean for my family?" One constituent came in so upset that there is an exception on workers to know how to negotiate to have their overtime paid out at time and a half instead of lieu time at hour for hour. He's never had to do this before, Mr. Speaker. His concerns are that if he opposes the employer, he is at risk of losing his job. Therein lies the rub: the power dynamic at play, that we worked to eliminate for workers' rights. He is speaking with co-workers about how to have these discussions.

A working Albertan does not pit workers against employers; that is what this bill does, with both having a large stake in the outcome. Workers need their hours to be honoured for what they have earned versus businesses' bottom lines. Workers take on overtime to help pay for a roof over their head. Workers take on overtime to help pay for braces. Workers take on overtime to help pay for their children's tuition costs. Workers miss out on major life moments by taking on overtime for the benefit of finishing the job and for earning additional pay for their family to be able to succeed here in our province.

Businesses' bottom lines do not hug your child at night and tuck them in. Businesses' bottom lines do not pay for formula and diapers. Businesses' bottom lines cannot pay for missing a first step or a first word or a first "I love you." How will this play out for the economy if Albertans don't have that additional \$2,500 in their pockets? Mr. Speaker, this is concerning.

2:50 p.m.

To hear the UCP repeat over and over that the thousands of dollars of the carbon tax deserves to be in the hands of Albertans, what is the difference when they are taking over \$2,500 from Albertans? This is a prime example that they weren't concerned with the amount of money in the hands of Albertans but where the money from Albertans was going. Instead of having that money back in circulation in Alberta, they would rather it be back in the hands of employers like large corporations, whose profits aren't reflected in the Alberta economy. For a party that shouts from the rooftops that they are about jobs and the economy of Alberta, this does not sound like they are concerned at all about Alberta's economy. The voters in Alberta voted for more jobs and an improved economy. They did not vote for losing money out of the Alberta economy, and this bill does just that. I'm just overwhelmed with the lack of insight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, and thank you for your lovely statement on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

We have Standing Order 29(2)(a), and I saw the Minister of Labour and Immigration on his feet. I'm not sure if he'd like to provide some brief comments or questions to the member.

Mr. Copping: I would. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to the comments made by the hon. member and a number of the members opposite and set the record straight. You know, I'd like to talk about three primary issues: the job creation, youth minimum wage, and general holidays as well as banked overtime.

First, talking about the youth minimum wage and the changes to the general holiday pay, Mr. Speaker, this is about creating job opportunities, particularly for youth. Members opposite fail to recognize that their policy changes, including increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and changes to the general holiday rules, created a youth job crisis in our province. At the time many

economists indicated that a 50 per cent increase in the minimum wage in the face of one of Alberta's worst economic downturns would result in job loss. Nonetheless, the previous government went forward and made changes not only to the minimum wage but to a number of work rules and increased taxes.

Canadian empirical research has generally found that a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage rate reduces employment among teens by 3 to 6 per cent. For example, the Bank of Canada did a study that suggested that a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage is estimated to decrease participation rates by nearly 3 per cent for 15- to 19-year-olds. What did the previous government do? They didn't increase it by 10 per cent. They increased it by nearly 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, these studies are actually borne out in fact. The Calgary Chamber of commerce reported that 55 per cent of businesses in Calgary that hired minimum wage staff reported layoffs due to the minimum wage increase. A similar CFIB survey reported that 55 per cent of businesses had reduced or eliminated plans to hire new workers. Furthermore, Restaurants Canada reported that their industry lost 10,000 jobs between 2015 and 2018, and this industry largely employs youth.

Mr. Speaker, we have a youth job crisis, and when we put forward policies to address these issues, the members opposite suggest that that's unfair. What isn't fair is that thousands of Albertans and, quite frankly, thousands of youths do not have jobs. These changes will get Albertans working, particularly young Albertans, get them on the job ladder, and give them the experience and skills they need to progress in their career and start earning more than the minimum wage.

I'd like to talk briefly as well concerning banked overtime, Mr. Speaker. This change is about providing greater flexibility for Alberta workers. Now, the hon. members on the other side have suggested that this will impact overtime pay. Let me be clear. Changes to the banked overtime rules do not impact paid overtime. What this does, however, is increase flexibility for workers and employers and provide greater opportunity for those workers to actually bank overtime.

One of the unintended consequences of the changes that the NDP made is that they imposed greater costs on employers for banking overtime, moving it from one to one and a half times. What this resulted in was an employer saying no to agreeing to banked overtime – right? – and that reduces opportunities for employees to bank their time and average out the time worked for a particular employer, particularly in those professions where you work for a period of time and then you have long periods of time off such as the construction industry. Now, by making this change back to 1 to 1, it will provide greater opportunities for employees to bank their overtime. And if they do not take banked overtime, they will be paid out at a minimum of 1.5 times their rate. It has been suggested by the members opposite that this provision will force employees to bank overtime whether they want to or not. The legislation is clear, Mr. Speaker. The only item in the current act that Bill 2 changes is the rate at which overtime is banked.

Let me point out items in the rest of this provision that we are not changing in the Employment Standards Code and that actually were endorsed by the previous government. I'll paraphrase here in the interest of time. First, section 23(1)(b) – again, we're not changing this, Mr. Speaker – there must be a written agreement. Section 23(2)(b): if banked overtime is not taken as time, then it will be paid out at at least 1.5 times. Section 23(2)(d): no amendment or termination is to be effective without at least one month's written notice given by one party or another. That goes both ways. Finally, section 23(3): an employer must provide a copy of the agreement to the employees affected. These items we are not changing.

Clearly, it is a written agreement between the employer and employees. There is choice involved in this written agreement. They can pull out of this written agreement. In fact, these provisions are currently in the act, and these are the provisions that were passed by the previous government.

So, Mr. Speaker, the provisions in the act are about creating more job opportunities for Albertans and for youth, and they are also about restoring worker rights. This was clearly laid out in our platform.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday is rising in debate.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure, an honour, and a privilege to join you this afternoon to speak to Bill 2. Of course, I had the opportunity to provide some comments on the amendment that was before us, but now we're back on the main bill.

I first want to have a conversation about the comments that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction brought forward, saying that we simply should not oppose this legislation because they have the mandate of, he made it sound, every Albertan, but that's just simply not the case. The fact is that there is a large portion of this Assembly, elected members of this Assembly, that are not members of the government caucus, and we have a responsibility to our constituents and to people across the province who did vote for us, whether their constituency elected an NDP member or not.

They have a responsibility to listen to us about the concerns that we have and about the concerns that our constituents have. So to stand in this House and say, "Oh, you know, it took up a quarter of a page in our platform or a line in our platform; therefore, we have a full mandate to implement it" is simply ridiculous. I would go further to say that this legislation goes against his mandate as the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. If you think about what is being put forward here, to say that if a student is in school, they get paid less, and if they work over 28 hours, then everything after that is \$15 an hour: this is an administrative nightmare. So for him to sit here and say, "All is good here; red tape reduced" – no, it simply is not. You are causing HR nightmares for employers across this province.

Now, I also have concerns with what the minister of labour said because the fact is that this legislation is weakening the ability of employees to bank their overtime at time and a half. Our government saw that there were concerns from employees with their ability to get paid for the work that they are doing. So we modernized the legislation, put us in line with almost every other jurisdiction if not every other jurisdiction across Canada, saying that if you work overtime, you will get paid, recognizing that you are helping an employer and you should be rightfully compensated for that. So for him to stand up and say, "Oh, we are not weakening it; we're increasing flexibility" – these were the exact words that he said. Well, in the conversation that I had about the amendment that was before us earlier, I shared an example of how employers in some circumstances use the legislation or lack of legislation to take advantage of workers. Like I said, it might be a unique circumstance, but the point of us legislating these changes and being elected to this House is to protect workers. So the fact that you want to take us back to a time when there wasn't legislation protecting us is simply irresponsible. I will not support that, and I have every right to stand in this Assembly and speak against that.

3:00 p.m.

Now, I want to point out a comment that our Premier made when the open for business act was tabled in the Legislature. He said, and I quote: look, \$13 an hour is a heck of a lot more than zero bucks an hour.

An Hon. Member: True.

Mr. Carson: It is true, but it's simply a false equivalency to say that you either get paid less or you've got no job. It's simply ridiculous, and I have concerns that that is his best comment to make to this legislation. I think that he should have a conversation with his press secretaries and his chief of staff, because for them to think that that was the best conversation to bring forward in the introduction of this legislation is, well, concerning, for sure.

Now, the biggest issue that I have and the biggest underlying disagreement that I have with the legislation that is before us, of course, has been brought up several times: it is a direct attack on young workers in our province. Now, this legislation is not simply one attack and, you know, nothing else changes. This is going to be done in conjunction with, I imagine, cuts to \$25-a-day child care. It will be done at the same time as cutting school nutrition programs, which we've already heard coming up in the news, where school boards are talking about cutting the nutrition programs because they aren't getting clarity on the funding moving forward. We haven't heard a commitment, as far as I have seen, to continuing the Alberta child benefit program. I think that the government probably sees the benefit of this program, and I really hope that they don't move forward on cutting that.

Even the price on carbon and the carbon levy rebate were helping young families. Believe it or not, I went to a few doors, and they said: who's the party that brought in the carbon levy rebate? That might surprise you, but there were people out there that said that, and many of them were young families that were seeing the benefit of getting that rebate because they were actually receiving more money back than it was costing them.

When we look at the bills that have been brought forward to this Legislature so far, we're seeing – excuse me; it's been a very long couple of days here – an attack on workers but an attack on young Albertans specifically. With the act to destroy GSAs, we're seeing an attack on young Albertans.

Mr. Nielsen: Who can't even vote.

Mr. Carson: Who can't even vote. Exactly.

With this legislation we're seeing it, and it's concerning because, as has been stated several times in the Assembly, these are people who did not have a voice in the last election. They did not give you a mandate. You talk about having such a big mandate. They did not give you this mandate to cut their wages. You should take the time to consult with young Albertans. For the members across the way to stand – and they have stood in this Legislature – and say, "I've talked to young Albertans who think this is great legislation," well, maybe you could introduce them in the House or, I mean, just share exactly why they think it's going to help them, because it doesn't seem reasonable to me.

I shared with the Legislature the story of my upbringing and the fact that my mother was 14 years old when she had me and that that was a decision she had to make. Now you're telling somebody like my mother, who's 14 years old and has a child, that she doesn't deserve to be able to help her child. You're saying: unless you drop out of school, we're going to pay you \$13 an hour. I think it's unreasonable.

Mr. Nielsen: It's disturbing.

Mr. Carson: It is disturbing.

I think it's unreasonable to tell any person, no matter how old they are, that they should get paid less and that they should have to go to a food bank afterwards because they're 17 years old. She had responsibilities that many 20-year-olds don't have in having a child that young, and she made the decision to continue going to school. This legislation will penalize somebody like my mother for doing that. Once again, it's been brought up several times that with this legislation, at a time when there are major concerns about high school completion rates, you are incentivizing people to drop out of school before they complete their diplomas, which is gravely concerning.

Now, something that hasn't been addressed by the government, at least not reasonably, is the effects that lowering the minimum wage is going to have on people with disabilities. Now we are going to get into a system where an employer has to make a decision between hiring somebody that's under 18, that they can pay less, and somebody with a disability. Now, I hope they make the right decision in ensuring that they are an inclusive employer, that they're supporting all people in our society, in our communities, but you are making it harder for that employer to choose the person with a disability, which is incredibly unfortunate.

Our government, through legislation in the 29th Legislature, brought up the wage for people with disabilities. We made it an even playing field because we recognize that we shouldn't make it harder for employers to choose to support people with disabilities.

Now, once again, we are also pitting students that are in school against students who are out of school. In the circumstance where for whatever reason a student is not attending school and they're under 18 years old, they are going to be less likely to get hired compared to somebody that's in school. Now you're hurting somebody that is not attending school for whatever reason, because it's actually harder for them to compete against somebody that can be paid less.

Another concern is what lowering the minimum wage for youth is going to do to seniors that are trying to get a job. You know, we're talking about a 17-year-old who may have work experience and that you can pay \$13 an hour compared to a senior, who you're going to have to pay more. You're actually hurting seniors through this legislation.

It's been brought up several times, the concerns around what lowering the minimum wage for youth does for people turning 18 years old. I'm concerned about the turnover, seeing somebody turning 18. An employer may no longer want to keep them on because they have to pay them more.

Now, of course, it's been shared in this Legislature several times that the NDP caucus has major concerns about what this means for banked overtime. I shared a story earlier, on the amendment, about an instance that happened to me where an employer took advantage of me in terms of crunch time, making sure that we were able to get the product out, which is reasonable and happens in a lot of industries. But then the employer came back to me and said: you can either choose to take a couple of days off, take a day off at regular time, or you can find yourself another job. Whether the minister thinks that happens or not, it happens. It happens, and you're really encouraging it to happen more. We need to protect these people.

Now, I am very proud that when we were elected in 2015, we raised the minimum wage to \$15. We recognized that if you're working 40 hours a week, you should not have to go to the food bank afterwards. Once again, it goes back to my values in being raised by a young mother. Now, we've heard several times from

the government caucus that, you know, all of them have signed the front of so many cheques and that we don't have any experience with that. Well, I have experience being a worker, and I don't think that you should hold it against me that I haven't run a business.

You know, running a business is not for everyone. Not everyone is going to have the opportunity to do that, just like not everyone is going to have the opportunity to go to postsecondary education, especially as we talk about increasing postsecondary tuition costs and lowering the minimum wage for students, who are no longer going to be able to afford postsecondary education. It's very frustrating for me to start pitting people against each other. You say you have so much more knowledge because you've signed the front of a cheque. Well, I have received many cheques, and I have helped those employers be able to sign the front of cheques, so I think that we should maybe move off that conversation. Imagine if one of us stood up and said: well, you don't have the same education as me, so you probably just shouldn't talk. The fact is that we were elected here by the members of our community for a reason, whether you agree with those reasons or not.

3:10 p.m.

Now, once again, I do want to just raise the fact that this government thinks it's okay to discriminate against people under the age of 18. As far as we can tell, it's legal. As shameful as it is, it's legal. The Alberta Human Rights Act does not protect people under the age of 18 from age discrimination. It protects them under reasons of discrimination but not for age. I'm sure that this is a conversation that the front bench of the government had with each other, and I imagine they might be – well, hopefully not – quite proud that they were able to get away with paying young Albertans less than everyone else.

Now, I started working from a very young age. I was also 14 though I didn't have the responsibility of raising a child, like my mother did. But I had important things to pay for. I had to start saving for postsecondary education. Of course, my mother, being as young as she was when she had me, had a lot of responsibilities to pay for other things, and I thought it was important to pay for my own education. Now, thankfully, I went to NAIT for radio and television broadcasting, not a full degree program, just a two-year diploma, and it was exceptionally less expensive than a four-year program. So I'm very thankful for that.

I just think about the Albertans who are looking at taking on, you know, \$20,000 to in some instances \$100,000 of debt to go get a postsecondary education, and this government is telling them that they don't deserve to be able to get paid enough to actually pay their way through that. Not everyone has the privilege of having a family unit that can help them pay their way through that. I think that it's reasonable to be concerned about how this legislation is going to affect them.

The Speaker: Well, thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I believe that I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore rising first.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your recognizing me. I was listening very intently to the Member for Edmonton-West Henday. During his remarks some thoughts came to me around what he was speaking about around the youth rate, about some of his lived experiences, with remarks about his mother as she was faced with certain challenges. I know it kind of coincides a little bit with some of the remarks that I was speaking to earlier around making sure to consult our young emerging leaders. These are individuals that did not get to vote in this recent election, yet

here we are potentially making decisions that will adversely affect them. I find it a little bit ironic that here we are saying, “Democracy: we need to protect it,” yet these young emerging leaders aren’t a part of it.

I think that as we were talking earlier about tapping on the brake there a little bit, maybe having a chance to discuss with them, get their points of view, I was hoping that possibly the Member for Edmonton-West Henday could comment on his slightly younger days, when he was going to school, on just some of the conditions around that time. I’m wondering: were there any kinds of decisions maybe being made by the government of the day, how they might have affected him, be it working relationships or how he was earning income or just simply decisions that impeded his ability to create a better lifestyle for himself? I’m hoping that maybe the member might comment on that a little bit and share that for the House so that we have the ability to make informed decisions here.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has approximately two and a half minutes remaining this time.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for the question. I guess that to that question I would say that the decisions that governments were making at the time, if anything, discouraged me from going to postsecondary institutions or going to get a four-year degree. At the time we had a Conservative government that was not willing to recognize that the cost of postsecondary education was hurting students’ abilities to go. When you come from a family of lower middle income, postsecondary education is simply, for the most part, out of the question. I mean, you can take on student loans, of course. I wasn’t necessarily willing to make that call, but that is exactly why I was so proud, when we were elected into government in 2015, to freeze tuition for four years, moving on five years now. It sounds like this government is committed – well, because they haven’t presented their own budget, the freeze will go into the next year, which I am very happy to see.

My concern is: what happens after that? We saw from the previous government, going into the election, that they were proposing market modifiers which were going to see the cost of tuition explode by thousands and thousands of dollars. If that’s what their plan is, well, you are going to see postsecondary completion rates or entry rates drop. I can only imagine. Once again, that is why I was proud to stand with our government in 2015 to raise the minimum wage, giving students the opportunity to go to school and get better educated. Of course, that’s important in our society.

Now, I will say that this all started, the idea of income equality started – I’m not going to have enough time to tell the story, I don’t think. No. I’ll just stop there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll save it for another time.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there are approximately 30 seconds left under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Carson: That was enough time to tell the story.

The Speaker: Well, I’m never really aware. Brevity may not be your number one quality. It’s sometimes tough to know how long the story would or wouldn’t take.

Seeing no other questions or comments under 29(2)(a), I see that the hon. the Member for Edmonton-South would like to debate.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s really my pleasure today to rise and speak to you because I’m going to be moving an amendment that I think may be one of your personal favourite amendments. I would move that the motion for second reading of

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I would just ask that you would pass the amendment to the pages, and I will give you the “proceed” in due course. Thank you, hon. member.

This will be referred to as amendment HA, if you are following along at home or if you’d like to add it to the top left of your amendment that you are receiving. It will be referred to as amendment HA.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-South has the call.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It really is my pleasure to speak to amendment HA, as you have so eloquently named it. This is an amendment that I’ve looked forward to moving because I think it allows us to take a hard look at this bill and say that we do need that extra six months to review what we’re getting ourselves into. We do need that extra six months to review what the pick-your-pockets bill is going to do to Albertans, how it’s going to adversely affect families, how it’s going to adversely affect workers, and how it’s going to affect so many different people across this province.

I mean, I guess there are certain things that I am very concerned about because we’ve heard so little from the government benches. Of course, a few of the members have gotten up under 29(2)(a) to speak about this, but really there has been no co-ordinated effort for them to defend the bill at all. In fact, of course, there are many ministers here who I think should be very concerned about this bill. I know that the Minister of Children’s Services must be, then, okay with the children under her care, Mr. Speaker, if they want to get an education while also working, that they would actually be making \$2 less, 13.3 per cent less, than any other person working.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

3:20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Children’s Services is okay with this happening to children under her care, then I am deeply concerned what the direction of this government will be for other forms of legislation. The minister ought to know that the children under her care are working hard not only to go to school and try to accomplish what they need in their education but will often also need to work to support themselves and try to save for many things in the future or perhaps just to deal with their day-to-day expenses.

The minister, of course, has not spoken. The minister has actually remained silent on these issues. If the minister would wish to stand up and clarify and perhaps talk to why she believes that it is okay to take money out of the hands of the children under her care, then I would welcome that opportunity. Of course, it looks like the minister either doesn’t care or doesn’t know what this bill is going to do to the people that she is obligated to protect. I think that’s a real shame. That’s something that the government should be very concerned about – I think all private members and all members of the opposition here are certainly concerned – that the minister does not know what effect this bill will have on her portfolio. The minister does not know what effect this bill will have on the people that she is charged to ensure have a safe home.

These children, who only want to make sure they have a strong education while also trying to work to support themselves, Mr. Speaker: this is going to be going into their pockets and picking those toonies right out. It’s going to be picking their pockets and

taking that money away from them every single day they go to work. If the minister is okay with that, I want to hear why. I want to know why the minister thinks that those . . .

Mr. Ellis: Point of order.

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

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j): “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member.” Obviously, the Minister of Children’s Services works hard every day to ensure that children in this province are taken care of. For the member to insinuate in any way that she doesn’t care about children, to insinuate in any way that there is harm to be done to children I think is absolutely outrageous and something that that member needs to apologize for, withdraw his comments. This is not a matter of debate. This is a situation where he is directly imputing false motives to this member within this House.

I would also, through you, Mr. Speaker, encourage this member to follow the rules within this book to ensure that when he is directing his comments, it is to you at the chair. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West standing.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly am happy to rise on this particular point of order. You know, what we are discussing here is a question of a two-tiered minimum wage that leaves young people, children, on the short end of that second tier. For the hon. member or any of us as individuals, I think we’ve made it abundantly clear that this puts young people, underage, minors – otherwise, children – at a distinct disadvantage. The implication of that, as we’ve described, I think, with a number of arguments, is that these young people are working side by side for equal work expectations in a given job situation yet under this proposal are being given a 13 per cent cut to their pay. A lot of mischaracterization that we’ve seen from the opposite side of kids working to buy an iPad . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I’m just looking for: with regard to this point of order is there new information that you would be providing on this?

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. You bet. The new information is – it’s not new information. I think it’s fairly well established that this has . . .

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but you just admitted that you weren’t providing new information on this issue.

Mr. Eggen: Sure. Absolutely. You betcha. Having this money taken away from the people – and young people are working to perhaps go to school, as I described. You have this whole contingent of grade 12s that, if they happen to have been born in one half of the calendar, end up getting a 13 per cent cut. This hon. member is pointing this out. It’s a matter of opinion that he is describing, thus under standing orders, with which I’m very familiar, and precedents and experience in this matter, there is nothing here to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: I will make the confession that at the time that the comments in question were made, I did not hear clearly what the hon. Member for Edmonton-South said. That said, there is

the opportunity to review what is stated at a later time. What I will do is that I will simply give the opportunity to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, as he knows what he said – I will find out later. Knowing what you said, do you feel at this time – in order to move this process ahead very quickly, are you willing to, then, just apologize for the comments and move on to the rest of your discussion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: This is clearly a matter of debate. I encourage you to make a ruling toward that direction.

The Acting Speaker: I will make a ruling in due course.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, as I was already saying, it is very clear what this bill does. This bill goes into the pockets of vulnerable children, particularly children that are under the care of this minister. They will go in and they will not be able to receive the pay that they deserve under equal work, equal pay. They will not have that money. They will have their pockets picked, they will have their toonies taken away, and what will result is that this minister will be complacent in accepting that the children under her care should be paid less if they wish to go to school.

That is simply a matter of the facts, Mr. Speaker. If the minister wishes to defend that or dispute that, then the minister absolutely has the opportunity to stand up in this House and do so. But we’ve seen that the front bench and indeed the backbench of the government have been hesitant to speak to this bill at all. Perhaps it’s because they know what the facts of this bill are. They know that this bill is designed to hurt people, to hurt families and ordinary working Albertans.

I really am concerned that this is the direction the minister wants to take with moving forward with the file, Mr. Speaker, taking advantage and picking the pockets of the children that she is charged to care. We really need to put the brakes on this bill. We really need to stop and say in six months: is this still the right move to make? I think it’s very clear that when we talk about these issues in this House, every single member, especially members of the front bench, who are charged to protect Albertans, who have that obligation and indeed that duty, should get up and defend themselves. When we move forward legislation that affects over 400,000 Albertans, when it affects so many people in such a broad, sweeping way, in such a negative manner, the members of the front bench should and indeed need to get up and defend why they think it’s okay to pick the pockets of ordinary Albertans.

Of course, the minister absolutely is supposed to be protecting these people, but what this bill does is that it goes in and damages her ability to do that. So why would the minister be okay with that? And if she is not, would she stand up and explain that to the House, Mr. Speaker? I certainly think that if I were the minister, I would be concerned that the children under the care of the ministry need to be able to both have an education and work to support themselves. That is something that is foundational to being a free citizen here in Alberta, that equal work should result in equal pay, that somebody who is working hard to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, as our friends across the aisle would like to say, absolutely should have the opportunity to both go and study in school so they can get their high school credentials and also work hard so they can support their family, so that they don’t have to stop at a food bank after getting off the bus on the way home.

I think that is something that is very clear and should be very clear to all members of the Assembly but that particularly the minister should be concerned about. The Minister of Children's Services should be getting up and talking about why she is either okay with this or why she does not support this bill. Mr. Speaker, I think that is something that all members would be excited to hear because we know that the minister definitely has the obligation to protect these children. We want to know how she will be doing that with the limitations brought forward by Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, because this bill will absolutely hurt those children. This bill will absolutely hurt the people in care. Those are the facts of the matter. When we look at the simple facts, this minister needs to explain and clarify to the House why she is okay or not okay with this happening.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've gone on at quite some length about the children in care that will need the support of the minister and how I hope we will hear some advantages being brought forward from her, but I think there are other ministers who also should have some very grave concerns about this bill. In particular, I'm very concerned with what the Minister of Education would have to say about this bill because the Minister of Education has yet to speak to this bill. I mean, there have been two amendments, a referral and a reasoned amendment, and of course we've spoken at quite some length to the main bill as well, and the minister has refused to get up and say anything.

3:30 p.m.

The question, of course, then becomes: why is the minister supporting a bill that encourages students to drop out of school? Mr. Speaker, the Education minister's real duty here should be to ensure that as many students as possible graduate from high school and receive their credentials. But the minister has refused to speak to this. The minister has refused to get up and defend the bill or oppose the bill. I would hope that the minister would oppose this portion of the bill, at least, because this portion of the bill directly affects the people that she is charged to educate. If the minister thinks that that is okay – it attacks the people she is charged to educate; it encourages them to drop out of school – then I want to know why the minister would think that. If she doesn't think that, then I want to see and I want to hear why she would vote against this portion of the bill.

I think it's something that is very clearly an issue that the members of this Assembly and certainly the opposition would want to know, and we want to know immediately because it is something that will affect Albertans for generations to come. There are 400,000 workers here that will be affected, Mr. Speaker, and we know that you can't have a prosperous Alberta if the Education minister is actually trying to get kids to drop out of school. We know that you can't have an Alberta that works for all if you have an Education minister that doesn't want kids to graduate. I, of course, hope that the Education minister is trying to get as many students through the credentialing process as possible, and I would be very pleased to hear her get up here in this House and say that. Unfortunately, we have yet to hear that, and I'm concerned that she may not.

If she doesn't, I'm concerned with whether she understands the ramifications of the bill that's being presented today. I'm concerned with whether she understands the ramifications of the pick-your-pockets bill and how that's going to affect students because those students will have to make a decision. They will have to choose whether they want to take a 13.3 per cent cut, a massive pay cut, or whether they want to drop out of school. That is something that is deeply concerning because the minister's obligation should be to ensure that these students have the best possible learning

environment and don't have to choose between food banks or studying. They shouldn't have to choose between whether to pay for a bus pass or stop at the food bank. The pick-your-pockets bill: taking the toonies away one at a time, it absolutely forces students to make that choice. It absolutely puts students and the most vulnerable students, Mr. Speaker, into very tough situations that are going to have adverse consequences.

That's why I think we need to just put the brakes on this bill a little bit here. We need to stop, we need to take a deep breath and think: in six months, is this still a good idea? After we've had some time to consult with Albertans, after we've had some time to look at the ramifications of this bill, after we've had some time to consult with the people who are actually getting the cuts, Mr. Speaker, the 400,000 workers who are having their pockets picked by every single member of this government, then we will know whether this bill is something that we want to move forward with.

I mean, I'm concerned that the Minister of Education – I mean, we've seen quite a bit in this Assembly over the last few weeks – hasn't been able to answer the questions that have been posed to her with a very satisfactory answer. That's concerning because I think the minister should have a single-minded goal. It should be a safe, inclusive learning environment for all students. But when you create a system where there are two tiers of young people, when you create a system where suddenly one person is worth more than another by a very significant margin, Mr. Speaker, 13.3 per cent, when you create these adverse situations for children, it creates a scenario where you cannot expect young people to have an easy decision. You cannot expect young people to be forced to make the decision between dropping out of school or going to work to support their family.

That is the reality of what the minister is going to be asking students to do if she refuses to get up and admonish this part of the bill. Again, I really encourage the minister to get up and speak to this. I think it's something that all members would be excited to hear about, and we want to know: does the minister support this bill, and if so, why does the minister support picking the pockets of the students she is entrusted to care for? If she doesn't support this bill, then will the minister be voting against it, and what amendments will the minister be bringing forward? I think those are important questions that Albertans deserve to know. They're important questions.

We need to make sure that we have the utmost respect and the best interests of students right here in this Assembly. When we don't have the minister getting up, when we have the minister remaining silent on the issue, it leads us to question: what is the intention here, and what will happen? The front bench, again, Mr. Speaker, either has not read the bill or does not understand what is going to happen. They either do not understand what the adverse consequences for so many people across this province are going to be or they simply don't care. I think either of those situations is really unacceptable for Albertans because it creates a situation where Albertans have this two-tiered system, and suddenly you're telling people that they are worth less because of the day they were born.

Mr. Speaker, we've gone down this path in the past, and it's been very clear that it doesn't work for working families. It doesn't work for families that rely on that extra income from maybe that one child. If you're asking that student, if you're asking that child whether they want to stay in school and study for that diploma exam or they want to stop at the food bank every day, then I think it becomes very clear that we are putting students in an impossible scenario. We are putting them in a situation that will hurt families and will hurt these vulnerable Albertans. The minister needs to stand up and explain why the minister is okay with that. The

Education minister needs to stand up and explain why she will be okay with students having to choose between food banks or dropping out of high school. That's something I think all members in this Assembly should be extremely concerned about.

I think members in the government caucus in particular should be extremely concerned about it because their front bench brought this bill forward, and they've brought this bill forward without much forethought, it seems, because as the opposition has brought up many times, time and time again today, Mr. Speaker, there are very core flaws with this bill. There are core flaws that directly influence very important figures in this province, very important ministers in this province, and ministries that have very large roles to play in shaping our future. When we talk about these concerns, it is very clear that the ministers either do not understand this bill and how bad it is for families or they simply do not care.

If it's either of those, I'm very concerned with the direction that we're going to be seeing in the next four years here. I'm very concerned that the Minister of Education will not understand how bad this is for her students. I'm very concerned that the Minister of Education thinks it's okay to encourage students to drop out of school.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a) I believe that I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition rising to speak.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-South for his very thoughtful comments on Bill 2 and, in particular, on this amendment. I do want to begin by saying that I appreciate the instinct he shows and the fact that he is challenging some of the other members of the front bench to actually do the work of the ministry that they are responsible for leading and to actually lean into what ought to be their mandate and asking them to answer for how they plan to navigate around the negative consequences of Bill 2 as it relates to their own mandate. I want to thank the member for that because that was an important thing.

I mean, we've been talking a lot about the UCP as a whole, we've been talking about the minister of labour, we've been talking about the Premier, but really the member is absolutely correct that there are front-bench members here who are tasked with the best interests of either school-age children, in the context of being in school, or children in care, in the context of being very vulnerable. In both cases, this bill undermines the best interests of those very people that these ministers have been asked by the Crown, quite frankly, through the authority of the Lieutenant Governor, to care for. They actually have an obligation, Mr. Speaker, to stand up and defend how it is they can actually fulfill their mandate while at the same time allowing this particular bill to go through and why they would not suggest amendments in order to protect their sphere of responsibility from being undermined by this bill.

You know, while I respect very much the Member for Edmonton-South for really focusing in on the rights of those workers who are under the age of 18, I'd like to talk for just a moment about the rights of workers who are part of that group which is characterized as being underemployed and suffering from high unemployment rates, which is, in fact, not just those 14 to 18 but 18 to 24.

3:40 p.m.

In fact, I'm sure many members on the other side know – if you don't, you should – that the Member for Edmonton-South was first elected when he was squarely within that demographic group. He was elected at the age of 20. Now, the members opposite suggest that the reason we need to undercut the salary and the wage of people who are under 18 is because that's the only way they'll get

training to do their job. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Here's a different way of looking at it. I would suggest that over the course of the last 24 hours the Member for Edmonton-South ought instead to be earning a premium because he's been training the members on the other side about how they should do their job. In fact, it had nothing to do with his age. It had simply to do with his energy and his focus and his commitment.

That's how you earn your wage, by showing up to work and being passionate and trying hard and speaking faster than anybody else in this room, and by doing that, you succeed at being very good at your job and earning your wage. The key is that what we should not be doing is undermining the contribution of the Member for Edmonton-South because of the fact that when he was first elected, he was the youngest person to ever be elected to this Legislature, and we should assume that when young people step up to take a job, they too will approach that job in just the way the Member for Edmonton-South has.

So I'm just wondering if the Member for Edmonton-South would like to offer advice to some of the members of this House who are maybe 15, 20, 30, 40, 45 years older than the Member for Edmonton-South about how best to approach the job of representing the people of this province in the House.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, with 23 seconds left.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep it brief. Certainly, I think that one of the most important things that I, of course, learned from the Leader of the Official Opposition is that members and, especially, ministers should get up and defend the things they believe in. Again, I can see many ministers here today who have not taken the opportunity to do that, and I would wish that they will talk about why these issues are important to them.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I will endeavour to be brief as many of us have been awake a long time, and it's been certainly a long, long session. We're certainly proud to stand in this House – and I think I can probably speak for both sides – for the hard work that we're doing on behalf of all the people whom we represent. You know, this is, of course, in regard to this amendment that has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South. As I read this, of course, he moves “that the motion for second reading of Bill 2 . . . be amended by deleting all of the words after ‘that’ and substituting the following” – and I paraphrase, of course – that it now be read six months hence. I'm going to have to respectfully disagree with the paper before us right now.

You know, I think that our party, our government has been very clear in our platform, which, of course, was put forward and supported by the majority of the people of Alberta on April 16. We were very clear in regard to An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Many people, sadly, through the previous government's policies and, of course, various reasons – there's been unemployment. There have been people, certainly, within my constituency that have been hit hard by the economic downturn as well as policies. Of course, that is something that we have been very clear on, that we are trying to make Alberta open for business, to bring back what was formerly known as the Alberta advantage to this province, a province that many of us, you know, came to after generations of family members that chose to live here because it is a place that has the highest quality of life, the highest standard of living, and a place which, I would argue, every single person in this

Chamber loves although we may have disagreements as to certain policies.

Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. As I indicated, we cannot support this amendment put forward by the hon. member, and I certainly encourage all members of this Chamber to not support this amendment.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, my whip counterpart can certainly put together a compelling argument and sentences that agree between subject and verb, but I respectfully disagree. I wonder, just having some questions for him: why, first of all, would a new government choose to have a bill like this? Taking money from people's banked overtime, taking away holidays, compromising Christmas as a holiday for people next year, maternity benefits, compassionate leave, minimum wage for young people: why would you put something like this up at the front end of your first session as a new government?

You want to set the tone for what Albertans are expecting from this government because it's a long haul, four years. It's just starting; we're only nine days in, I think. I just really wonder if the hon. member can help me with some of the logic as to why they would choose to have a bill like this, an open season on workers, you know, a pick-your-pocket kind of tone to send out to the people of Alberta, right? Here we are, a brand new government. Here we go. Watch out; we're coming after your banked overtime: that just is not a coherent presentation of what I think Albertans would expect.

I know that the hon. members like to say: oh, well, it was all in our platform, and people voted for that, so sit down and shut up because that's the way it is. Well, I mean, this is the way it is, hon. Speaker, where we do debate these things. In a democracy it's a pluralistic thing. People vote and represent all kinds of different opinions and so forth, and we have a strong opposition here that obviously was backed by hundreds of thousands of Albertans that voted that way, too. So you have to make sure that you give the fullness of time and consideration to debate around these important issues. Again, I think, in my humble opinion, that this amendment brought forth by the Edmonton-South representative is reasonable and very modest in its scope. It doesn't necessarily even mean that this bill disappears; rather, it is given the consideration of time, right? Time is the healer of all wounds, and time is a way by which we learn to become wiser as we get older. This bill: I really don't think that it's going to age well with time. I really don't see that happening. You know, you could certainly make a case for that in the interim.

I believe that Albertans are expecting and hoping for the best, and I believe that the character of Albertans is that they hope and expect the best for themselves and their families but for others, too. That's kind of the way we roll in my family and, I think, in the vast majority of families, too. We look past our noses to others in other places, in other socioeconomic circumstances, and in other life circumstances, too.

I've learned a lot about banked overtime that I didn't know about before. I'm really impressed by how people pushed back on this particular issue because it actually means a hole, sometimes of several thousand dollars, in an individual's or a family's budget, and I don't think that that's fair. I think people are starting to wake up to that injustice as well. You know, there are the actual words that are printed on the page of a bill, and then there are the tone and the intent and the emotive response that people will bring from laws

and regulations that we provide here in the Alberta Legislature. You've got to think of both of those things, Mr. Speaker, when you're building legislation here because people will judge you on the logic of your decisions, but they'll also judge you on the tone that you set for governance. As I said before, I'd just be curious for the hon. government whip to . . .

3:50 p.m.

The Acting Speaker: Are there other members looking to speak to amendment HA? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak to this amendment. This will be the third time I've been able to speak on this matter in second reading, and each time I do, I have a fair amount of time to speak but not necessarily so much time to prepare. This time I will attempt to be a little bit more organized in my thoughts as we speak to why we think this particular motion should be passed so that this bill does not proceed through second reading at this point.

I think what we need to begin with is that, you know, there's been quite a bit of conversation around this issue of electoral mandate. There have been a lot of folks saying: well, you know, we won the election, so you should just let us do what we want; and how disrespectful you are for actually taking a bit of time to talk about this issue, to challenge the concerns that people might have; and how dare you, actually, you know, speak in the House for as long as you have about this issue. Various people have argued that that was the mandate, that Albertans gave this government the mandate to pass Bill 2.

First of all, obviously, just at the outset, they also gave us the mandate to be the Official Opposition, so I will not now or ever apologize for that. In fact, it is my duty and my obligation to work as many hours as necessary to ensure that we exhaust all of the resources that we can to be a strong opposition for the people of this province. That is the mandate, ultimately, that we were given, and people understood very clearly, without any equivocation, without any kind of slippery language or anything like that that we believe strongly in the rights of working people to be treated fairly. So it should come as no surprise that we would do everything we can to ensure that working people will be treated fairly.

Now, that being said, though, I think there is also another matter that we need to consider around this issue of mandate. The members opposite argue that their mandate is included in their however-many-pages platform. They love to talk about their platform.

Member Ceci: A hundred and one.

Ms Notley: Is it 101 pages?

Member Ceci: Pretty much.

Ms Notley: Something like that.

Now, of course, one of the interesting things about that platform, which I must ensure history remembers, is that it was a living document, and it changed with the wind. When it did change, there was no press release that went out to say: "Oh, we just rewrote this section," or, "Oops, we added a new section." It just kind of happened in a very sort of fluid kind of way. It was precedent setting, actually. I will congratulate the members opposite for completely changing the sort of democratic process that typically surrounds the practice of a political party introducing a platform, presenting it to voters, saying, "Here's what we believe; vote for us or don't vote for us on the basis of it; hold us to account; move on." In fact, instead, what we had was an ever-changing, ever-evolving, ever-amending document.

Really, you have to sort of get immediately into this process of saying: well, I just screenshot UCP platform 4.9 and compared it to my screenshot of UCP platform 9.8, and I think that if we average the two together, what they mean to say is this. Like, you really, literally, Mr. Speaker, would have had to have a team of researchers on it to really understand exactly how to nail it down. It actually sort of makes real the figurative description of nailing Jell-O to a wall. That's kind of what tracking the UCP platform was like over the course of the election. But, congratulations, you know. I mean the media did report very briefly on the nailing Jell-O to the wall nature of the UCP platform, and people still went ahead and voted for the UCP. Fair enough. But to be clear, what they voted for was Jell-O that was nailed to a wall. So when you try to back up your position on the basis of said Jell-O, know that that rationale is going to be about as solid as the Jell-O.

That being said, when the UCP platform 1.9, or whichever one it was, was released, we grabbed a couple or three or four different versions of it and went through it. Over the course of more than one version the position of the UCP around changes to worker protections actually remained consistent between at least a couple of versions. As a result, when we went through it to see what was there and what it meant, we found the provisions that talked about these changes to banked overtime. We quickly raised the alarm. We said: "Oh, sheesh. This isn't very good. This looks like they are going to go after workers' rights to overtime pay through the banked overtime scheme." But when we said that, the members of the government and, in particular, the now Premier hastened to assure us: no, no, no; that's not what it meant. What he said was, and I quote from an April 2, 2019, *Edmonton Journal* article: "This does not affect overtime pay. I repeat – it does not affect or diminish overtime pay." That is what the Premier – not at the time; then the Leader of the Official Opposition, the leader of the UCP and now Premier – said to voters in response to the concern that we raised about what appeared in the UCP version of the platform that was released on the day preceding that quote. Fair enough.

Now, I don't know exactly – I can't remember – if they actually at that time included the specific wording that they were proposing to move forward with but, nonetheless, they did say in general that this is what they were going to do. The Premier hastened to assure Albertans: "No, we're not going to touch overtime. It will not affect overtime. It will not diminish it in any way."

Interestingly, experts in the field immediately responded by saying: "Ah, well, we're not entirely sure that the Premier knows what he's talking about here because, in fact, it will diminish overtime. It will affect overtime. It will hurt overtime." They explained as much as they could. My question, then, to members opposite who make the argument: "Listen, this was in our mandate. This is something we told Albertans before the election, and they voted for us, and we got more votes than you did, nyah-nyah, nyah-nyah, nyah-nyah. Therefore, why are you still here talking?" – when they say that, when they say, "That was our mandate," do they refer to the mandate as what was in Jell-O doc 4.0? Do they refer to the mandate as the Premier's statement that it will not affect or diminish overtime, or do they refer to the mandate as the experts' assessment that said: "Oh, no, no. This will affect and diminish overtime"?

So we had people saying: "Oh, no, no. The Premier is incorrect. Basically, what we can see here is that this is going to affect and diminish overtime." Then we had the Premier saying: "No, no. It will not affect or diminish overtime." So I'm just curious as to whether the mandate was that which came out of the mouth of the Premier or that which came out of the mouth of the experts who looked at what the Premier was proposing and actually analyzed the consequences of what the Premier meant. I'm just curious. Which part of that conversation actually constitutes the mandate that they

claim they have to bring in this pick-your-pockets legislation? So that's a question, and maybe at some point we'll get the answer to that.

4:00 p.m.

Now, on the matter of a mandate, though, the degree to which one can argue mandate really comes down to the similarity between what one promised and what one delivers. I would argue, based on widely publicized statements of the Premier that their plan with respect to workers' rights would not diminish or affect overtime, that the mandate, therefore, was for them to bring in changes to the legislation that would not diminish or affect overtime. As a result, their mandate is that they should amend the legislation and stop any changes that they are currently proposing to overtime because that is actually the mandate that the Premier himself said to the people of Alberta during the election.

If now they've decided that they've reconsidered or they've talked to their donors or whatever the process is and that they do now want to do what is in this bill, which is to affect and diminish overtime, then they should come clean on the fact that they are now already, two and a half weeks into whatever we are, diverging from the mandate that they secured from the people of this province. I would argue that that's exactly what they've done because I have the quote from the Premier. Yet I have the black and white words in front of me in the bill, and I can tell you with absolute certainty that what they are proposing to do is affect and diminish overtime, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the other thing the Premier said during this sort of mandate acquisition period, otherwise known as an election, in response to the concerns that were raised about this bill: "There were no complaints about abusive practices by employers. There weren't in the past; I'm sure there won't be in the future." Now, I don't know where exactly it was that the Premier secured that particular piece of information from. He stated it like it was a fact. But I can tell you that the public record shows that that is not correct. The public record is easily accessed because when the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods led the consultation around the changes to the labour code and the Employment Standards Code, we had significant public engagement, and we had submissions from a number of different Albertans, and in fact it was very clear that there were complaints and concerns about abuse by employers of the banked overtime scheme that existed prior to our change to the legislation.

So, again, this mandate that the members opposite speak about so passionately was premised on information that was categorically untrue, Mr. Speaker, because in fact there were complaints. Now, I'm sure that there are some people that the members opposite spoke to like the restaurant association, like Merit Contractors – you may recall Merit Contractors. They had big billboards up and down the highway for about a year and a half before the election that said: vote UCP. You know, that objective, neutral, nonengaged organization: that group, I am sure, told the Premier that they had no complaints with the previous overtime regime, prior to us changing it. I will not hesitate, though, to suggest that there were other people who did actually have complaints about the previous overtime regime. Therefore, the Premier's statement that was reported in the news on April 2, 2019, that there were no complaints, was, in fact, also factually incorrect. I would suggest that when you have a mandate that is premised on information which is not correct, the quality of your mandate begins to fritter away at the sides. Now, you know, we shall see how far we go and how long it takes, but I'm going to say that the mandate is somewhat tattered as it relates to this particular issue.

I do believe that mandates are important. I do. But I fundamentally disagree that the members opposite received a mandate on this issue because, at the heart of it, their leader did not correctly discuss what their platform was in relation to the actual facts. He, in essence, to put it another way, said one thing before the election and is delivering a very different thing after the election, and that, my friends, does not a mandate make.

Now, let's just talk a little bit about this issue. I would like to just dive into it a little bit. The labour minister took the time to talk a little bit about this legislation, and I appreciate that. The only unfortunate part of it was that in so doing, with the greatest of respect, it revealed the fragility of the evidence and the analysis which underlies the decisions to amend the overtime provisions in the way that they have, and it is unfortunate for the working people of Alberta who are going to pay the price for the labour minister's misunderstanding of the issue.

First of all, he was quick to talk to us about research as it relates to the impact of certain things. I guess that was actually more about the youth wage, so I'll hold off on that. Let's just talk a little bit about the overtime. You know, it's excellent that the minister took the time to walk us through the sections of the act. Rest assured, we have also reviewed those sections of the act. We reviewed those sections of the act when we made the first set of changes, and we reviewed the sections of the act that are being amended now as a result of Bill 2.

What the minister needs to understand is that with the practice that is happening and did happen prior to our amendment of the overtime premium under the banked overtime scheme to provide 1.5 pay as opposed to 1.0 pay, there was an incentive for the employer to get people into the banked overtime scheme prior to our changes because overtime then was paid at straight time. What we saw happening was that employers would construct an agreement with the majority of their employees. Many employers who benefit from this kind of regime hire people on a seasonal or project basis. They would construct the agreement with a very small group of employees, put the agreement in place, and then new employees would come in and they would be bound by that agreement. That's exactly what the legislation that the minister of labour quoted specifically enables. That is exactly the way it worked before.

Individual employees, as outlined in the legislation, when they came on, were bound by that agreement, and individual employees do not have the authority to individually pull themselves from that agreement. Therefore, employers who need these kinds of work arrangements in place established these banked overtime agreements prior to hiring the majority of their employees. Then there is no opportunity for it to be changed, especially in non-union workplaces. It was abused, and we knew this. We knew this because, when we did our consultations, that is what we heard from workers who had been the victims of these kinds of problems.

Now, it is true that the incident of abuse of this kind of regime disappeared in the last two years, so the labour minister would not see much evidence of that over the last two years. But you know why? There was no longer an incentive for it to happen because banked overtime agreements ensured that overtime was provided, whether by way of time off or otherwise, at one and a half times. The incentive to do it had disappeared. Therefore, the abuse of the system had disappeared, too.

4:10 p.m.

However, we're actually in a position now that's worse with this act than it was when we changed it in the first place because at least in the past, before we changed it from 1.0 time to 1.5 time, the employer had to give that time off within a three-month period.

When we changed it from 1.0 to 1.5, we said, "Hey, let's enhance flexibility; let's give people more time to take the time off rather than have it paid out," because, as I was saying earlier today, some people really just do want time. You know, they want it at the overtime rate, but they prefer time than extra money on their cheque. We said: "Sure. Let's expand it from three months to six months. Because it's at the 1.5 rate, we do increase flexibility, but at the same time there's no incentive for the employer to push workers into an unfair situation."

Now we're in a situation where we have the worst scenario because we have the incentive, if this bill passes, for abuse of these overtime arrangements to reappear just as it was happening before we got rid of the incentive in 2017. Now it can be abused even more because instead of having three months within which to do it, they can do it within six months. We actually end up further behind than we were when we fixed this provision which, to be clear, was the worst provision of its kind in the country. This is what we are talking about.

I know I sound a little bit legalistic right now, but it frustrates me to hear people say things that are not accurate and do not reflect an understanding of the legislation and the way it has been applied and enforced and utilized over many, many years. I think that the people of this province deserve to know what this government is doing to their overtime, and that is why I'm taking the time to explain it, Mr. Speaker. That is why what we are dealing with, then, in fact, is a substantial plan by this government to affect and to diminish the overtime received by working Albertans in this province, in contrast to what they promised during the election.

Now, there are other things that are happening just in the overall collection of changes that this government is doing, and I want to talk a little bit about those as well. We have talked a bit about youth and the youth wage. Now, the argument that is put before us is that what we need to do is cut the wages of youth so that they can get a job. Now, as I've said before, somewhat facetiously but not entirely, is that the logical conclusion of this argument is: hey, let's just cut all their wages. Why pay them anything? Why not get them to pay for their own job? Just think of the jobs we could create if young people paid for the right to have a job. Oh, my goodness, it'd be crazy. I don't know why these guys haven't thought about it yet. I'm a little worried about the next session of the Legislature. We might even see it. Anyway, I think we all know that that is kind of nonsensical, and so, too, is the argument that by cutting wages, we increase jobs.

Let's not just get into a rhetorical fight between us about this. Let's look at the evidence. The minister of labour briefly said: "You know what? We have lots of research that the minimum wage is resulting in a loss of jobs for young people." Then he pointed to discussion papers provided to him by lobby groups for employers. Oh, my, my, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's really important, when you make significant policy changes that do things like drop the wage rate of young Albertans by 13 per cent, that you do your homework a little bit more than simply taking, lock, stock, and barrel, the lobby documents from your lobby groups and trying to call that research. I am sorry, but the restaurant association – God bless them – are there to lobby for owners of restaurants, and that is lovely. But the fact that some of their members anecdotally describe that they're feeling like they might not hire as many people, while interesting and worthy of consideration and definitely a submission that needs to be considered, is not independent, third-party, validated research.

I think it's helpful to look at things like Stats Canada and third-party, independent groups that are perceived to be separated somewhat from the lobby groups that are putting forward a certain position. I would suggest, then, that we do something simple like look at StatsCan. The theory goes that in Alberta we introduced the

minimum wage and youth unemployment rose. Well, as the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford did a lovely job of demonstrating at some point earlier today, which is Wednesday still, there is a difference between an associative relationship and a causative relationship.

Of course, what the members opposite are arguing is that youth unemployment is up and that therefore it must be because of the minimum wage. They are not in any way, shape, or form considering that if youth unemployment is up, maybe it's because the price of oil dropped 70 per cent, sending the province into a recession and that, in fact, unemployment is up everywhere and that, historically speaking, youth are always the most hard hit on these things. In any setting, in any jurisdiction it is sort of a last-in, first-out kind of scenario for them, and that's exactly what happened. One could also make that argument. But, no, these folks have decided that the existence of a recession is irrelevant and that the high youth unemployment is entirely related to the minimum wage.

Well, what we could do, then, is look at another jurisdiction that is going through similar economic circumstances as the province of Alberta that did not change its minimum wage and look to see what happened there, as measured by StatsCan, which is an independent sort of evidence-based agency. What we know from that, then, is that next door, where our good friends in Saskatchewan are, they are not suffering to the same degree that we are from – I mean, they're actually suffering more. Their economy has slowed much more than ours has, and I would argue that that's because of their austerity as opposed to the approach to economic support that our government took, but that's a completely different conversation. Nonetheless, they too did suffer a slowdown because of the drop in the price of oil. It wasn't as big a part of their economy as it was in Alberta, but it was certainly significant, and they did suffer.

In April 2019 their youth unemployment rate was 10.8 per cent, and our youth unemployment rate was 9.7 per cent. Rather than getting lost in the fact that ours is actually lower than theirs – certainly, these folks, I'm sure, if the shoe was on the other foot, would absolutely argue that it's because of the minimum wage, but let's not get lost in that – what we know is that in both provinces there is a gap between the unemployment rate average and the unemployment rate for young people, and the unemployment rate for young people is higher in both provinces. It is more than double in Saskatchewan. It is higher in Alberta but not double.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. There's clearly a problem with youth unemployment in Saskatchewan. It's actually, arguably, a bigger problem than it is here in Alberta. They did not bring in a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. So one would argue, if one were engaging in a more sort of balanced analysis, that the minimum wage is actually not the cause of the unemployment rate in Alberta amongst young people, and I think that there would be some evidence to support that based on Stats Canada labour analysis.

4:20 p.m.

I think it's really important that, once again, we are straightforward and honest with Albertans about why we are doing this, because this is not about creating jobs amongst Alberta's young people. This is about giving a 13 per cent pay cut to a group of very vulnerable employees, I assume in order to give at least the semblance of giving yet another break to another group of Albertans. I'm not sure exactly why it's being done, quite honestly. That being said, it is very important that we are clear here that this does not reduce youth unemployment. What it does do, though, is that it creates the incentive for higher levels of youth unemployment for kids who are 18 and above.

I can speak quite honestly about the situation. I'll just talk about my family for a moment. I have one child, my son, who started

working when he was 16, and that's great. He's been quite lucky. He got the benefit of minimum wage increases. He's now 20. He's been working for four years. He's got a solid resumé. I mean, it's not like he's, you know, doing nuclear physics or anything – he may someday, which is a whole different issue – but he's certainly got a good, strong resumé of being that person that shows up to work and shows up regularly. His supervisors like him, and he does the job he's asked, and he's got that stuff on his resumé, and that's really going to help him as he goes forward looking for more work. I'm so glad that he's had the opportunity to do that regardless of the nature of the work he's been doing. It's the kind of thing that helps kids get started as they make their way in the world and start looking for work.

Now, on the flip side, my other child, my daughter, has been involved in extracurricular activities, above and beyond her school, to the tune of about 20 hours a week throughout high school. What that's meant is that apart from very, very little, sporadic contract jobs here and there, she really hasn't had too much work experience because she's been so focused on her extracurricular activities. Well, that's great, but here's the deal now. Here's the rub. She's just about to graduate. She's 18. She's about to go out and start looking for full-time employment, probably in the service industry, probably the restaurant services industry, just like her brother. But she's 18, so now she is likely going to find a much, much more difficult time to get that job because folks can hire a whole different group of people for 13 per cent less than they'd pay her. So look at what we've just done here. We've actually made it harder for her to find a job now and for every other 18-year-old who has worked like the dickens to get the kinds of marks they need to be accepted into the programs they need to get into, to do that work.

I mean, folks over there love engineers. They're big, big fans of engineers. I'm a big fan of engineers, too. They're incredibly important parts of our economy. You know very well that it is very, very hard to get into an engineering program at a place like the U of A. A lot of kids in grade 10, when they decide that that's what they want to do and they, unlike my children, listen to the pleas of their parents and say, "Yes; okay; I will go into engineering; stop whining; I'll do it," when they do that, they then have to work. They don't just go to high school. Many of these kids go to high school, and then they go to high school all over again for the remaining eight hours of the day, working to keep their marks up because it is that hard to get into engineering now at university. It didn't used to be, but now the marks that kids are expected to earn in order to get into engineering are through the roof. These kids are working really hard, and some of them, as a result, will not necessarily be getting part-time jobs when they're 15, 16, or 17.

Then when they graduate from high school, maybe if they're lucky enough, they get accepted into engineering. But then they come across the tuition, and they go: "Oh, for the love of God, I'm going to have to get some work. I can't afford this tuition and all these costs without also having a part-time job." And there they are. They're off trying to get that part-time job to help them stay in university, that they worked so hard to get into, a very difficult program, and they're competing with people that get paid 13 per cent less than them now thanks to this bill. So this does not – this does not – reduce unemployment amongst young Albertans, those people between 15 and 24. It shifts the burden, and it actually makes it harder for kids who are 18 or 19 who haven't for a variety of very good reasons broken into the workforce. It makes it harder for them now to get in.

What about those kids that do get into the workforce before they turn 18? Well, you know, I want to talk just a little bit about that, because the Member for Edmonton-South, I think, did raise a very, very good point. I don't know if the Minister of Children's Services

has had an opportunity to be briefed on this yet, but once she is, she will learn that children in care, many of them, by the time they reach the age of 16 will not necessarily be living in a stable family situation. There are more than a few occasions where those children are supported by social workers to live independently or quasi-independently. While they're doing that, of course, they are struggling to cobble together enough money to live on. Now what we've done is that we've said to those kids who are in care but often are not living in secure family situations – they're living in group homes. They're going from foster home to foster home in some cases. They are literally being set up to live independently on their own. Those kids are working to help make their way and stay off the street and finish school and live their lives, and that's the group of kids, under this government's care, that we are now going to force to take a 13 per cent pay cut. It is a travesty.

Quite frankly, if I were the Minister of Children's Services, I would lose my mind on my cabinet colleagues if this is what happens to the kids that I am statutorily responsible for the care of, that the second bill in this House goes after the income of the kids that are under your care to the tune of 13 per cent. Shameful. Shameful.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Then, of course, the Member for Edmonton-South also did a very good job of asking the Education minister to come clean, because, of course, the particularly unique proposed structure of this idiotic plan to roll back the wages of working people under the age of 18 suggests that they will be paid the reduced rate if they're in school. If they can prove that they're 16 or 17 and not in school, well, then they get to keep the minimum wage. What exactly does this do to the objective – I am going to for the moment give the benefit of the doubt to the government, and I'm going to assume that this is still actually their objective – that they want more Albertans to graduate from grade 12 and not fewer? What does it do to that objective?

You have written a bill that statutorily incents kids who are struggling in high school to drop out. You could call this the drop-out-premium bill, in fact. What kind of Minister of Education would sit by while the minister of labour wrote a bill that could otherwise be named the dropout premium . . . [interjection] Sorry. I appreciate that it's a regulation.

Why would you stand by and let that happen? It's a tremendous abandonment of your responsibility. Of course, we don't have a mandate letter. We just have to nail the Jell-O to the wall platform document of the UCP. But I think it was silent on the issue of trying to have more people graduate, so again I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that the mandate does not include a plan to reduce the number of people graduating from high school.

However, your second legislative action, combined with the regulations coming out of what's probably your third or fourth cabinet meeting, does exactly that. They create a statutory incentive for kids to drop out of school. Just shameful. Just shameful.

4:30 p.m.

Now, we also have the minister in charge of Community and Social Services. Again, that minister is responsible for providing services to, among others, Albertans with disabilities. I assume that by now that minister will have had the opportunity to meet with the stakeholders for that ministry, including self-advocates, people with disabilities as well as people who work on behalf of those people with disabilities. They will tell them that it is not always easy to have people with disabilities find employment. That, of course, not only helps them earn money and improve their living conditions, but it also is fundamentally important to their sense of self and their ability to engage in the community and to live their very best life.

Once again, what we have done with those adults is that we have made it more difficult for them to find that work because we've created an incentive for people to hire people under the age of 18 rather than considering enhancing the inclusivity of their workplace and getting the benefit of an employee who might have particular special needs but at the same time a capacity to do particular jobs as well or better than many others and in a way that would give meaning and direction and substance and joy to their life. But now, unfortunately, that job that they could do with tremendous dedication and loyalty is being given to somebody who can be paid 13 per cent less. Again, the minister in charge of Community and Social Services, who is responsible for these people, I would hope at some point will speak out against this statutory plan to disincentivize the employment possibilities of folks with special needs and disabilities.

Now, this whole issue of the youth wage is, of course, not new to Alberta, and other people have mentioned this, but it bears repeating again. It used to be the case that we had a discriminatory and lower youth wage in the province of Alberta, and then in the '90s the matter was reviewed by the government of Ralph Klein, who many of the members opposite are great fans of. At that time, after the review, the government concluded that the youth wage was unfair, that it hurt employment opportunities of people over a certain age, and that it was a bureaucratic nightmare. Essentially, it created red tape. That's what they concluded. So they wisely, with common sense, decided to jettison that plan.

Now these folks, allegedly the fighters against red tape, not only have created a whole new ministry with staff and people who walk around – and I'm sure we're going to have red tape month sometime soon. We'll all have little, extra-special red tape pins that the government gets printed, and all the extra staff will run around and do red tape photo ops. Oh, it's just a plethora, a red tape jobs extravaganza, a whole new ministry. Meanwhile what we're doing is that we are creating additional red tape for people over there in the ministry of labour.

What we've got is this ridiculous situation. Here's what employers now have to do. Well, of course, they really have to dig in on the age of their workers. That's the first thing. They have to then investigate whether that worker is or is not in school. Well, that's not a big pain in the butt. Good luck trying to figure out that information and ascertain it one way or the other. Then what they have to do is that they have to adjust their payroll system so that that person either doesn't work more than 28 hours, or if they do, their payroll system automatically has some kind of program in it to click and pay them more after 28 hours, which is also complicated. Then, of course, they have to further adjust their payroll system so that when that person turns 18, their pay changes. So it's not just a simple process, Madam Speaker. I would argue that that process, actually, itself kind of sounds a bit like red tape, sounds like a bit of an administrative burden that we are putting on folks.

Now, granted, there is a payoff for it. There's a 13 per cent reduction in payroll costs. But then, at the end of the day, probably you've got to pull back, and maybe it's only now a 9 per cent reduction in payroll costs because the other 4 per cent just went to the administrative burden of that. So I guess we've created red tape jobs for those people who are now administering when and where the employer can actually pay the reduced, discriminatory, pick-your-pockets wage. That is a thing that has been done, and it really makes no sense.

Another thing, of course, that is included in this bill is the plan to scoop out of people's pockets statutory pay holidays. There are a whole bunch of new rules around when people can claim their statutory pay. In essence, when you look at those rules – again, you know, I've got to say that I'm pretty sure these guys have an

unstated antagonism for people who are young. I don't know exactly why that is. This will disproportionately affect, I suspect, young people and definitely disproportionately affect lower income people.

What it does: it particularly means that when people are hired for seasonal work, they are disqualified from getting stat pay. That's in essence what it does. Of course, there are particular times of the year when people hire up, staff up. For instance, if you're in retail, you staff up in November and December in order to deal with the incoming Christmas holidays. But heaven forbid that you are one of those new employees who's been hired as part of that staffing-up exercise. You are not going to get an extra cent when you're forced to work on Christmas Day. What is the profile of the person that takes the job when retailers are staffing up in anticipation of Christmas? Well, I'll tell you. They're young. They're mostly women. They're often students. So, you know, young female students: that's whose pockets will be picked by this particular element of Bill 2.

Member Ceci: Same with garden centres.

Ms Notley: Garden centres are another group. That's another seasonal place. Those folks will have their pockets picked.

Again, what are we looking at? Lower income people and new Canadians who get pulled into these short, seasonal jobs. And thanks to the plans of this government in Bill 2, they will get less, and they will have their pockets picked by this piece of legislation. Again, it's one of these things where we are choosing to create jobs by taking money away from the people who need it the most, Madam Speaker, with absolutely no indication that the jobs will actually be created. That's what they do there.

4:40 p.m.

One other thing that I want to talk about, of course, is the whole issue around the effort of the folks here to take their marching orders probably from Merit Contractors, who, I said, did a lovely job of running billboards all over the province on behalf of the Premier and the UCP for many, many months before the election, I think probably over a year. You know, I'll give them credit. It took them a while because originally their billboards . . .

Member Ceci: You couldn't read them.

Ms Notley: You couldn't read them. You didn't know what they were talking about. I think that at a certain point Merit Contractors might have gone off and found themselves a better agency. I don't know.

But at a certain point there was no question – big signs all over the place: vote UCP; vote UCP – that Merit Contractors had a clear position, a very clear position on the issue of card check and automatic certification. So they got their gift. They got their quid pro quo. You know, they put up a whole bunch of signs saying, "Vote UCP," and in return they got card check rolled back because they don't like unions. Merit Contractors on its surface is an anti-union organization that exists primarily in the construction sector to undermine the wages of people who work in construction. So they got their gift.

You know, it's interesting. Previously I was talking just on the basic math that we used to come up with the calculation and how the average Albertan who works overtime would lose up to \$2,500 every 12 weeks. I had to allow for the fact that it's not an exact calculation, of course, because we're using a global number of people who work overtime and a global number of overtime hours, and then we're using the average rate of pay that those folks earn. We may be overshooting the amount a little bit because we can't

factor out those people who are on union contracts. It's likely the case that those people on union contracts do make a higher wage, so they push up that average of the wage that we're using to make these calculations, and at the same time they are protected from this pick-your-pockets bill being brought in by this government because of their union contract. The majority, I suspect, of union contracts have particular stipulations with respect to how overtime is paid. That's a benefit of being a member of a union.

But it's interesting. On the off chance that we overestimated the cost to Albertans of the pick-your-pockets bill, by making sure that we reduce the number of unions and we reduce union density by making it harder for unions to organize and we give more opportunity for employers to use their inherent control over the workplace as a means of dissuading their employees from voting for a union, then, of course, that estimate of how much Bill 2 and the overtime pick-your-pockets piece will cost actually goes up. So just in case we overestimated the cost to average working people of the pick-your-pockets bill as it relates to the overtime efforts, people can be assured that the consequence of removing the card check provision will ensure that unions will become less frequent, and therefore the benefits to employers and the loss to workers with the overtime changes will grow. Just in case anyone wants to accuse me of overestimating, we'll get there thanks to this other little gift that the minister of labour is putting into the legislation.

We know that, frankly, if you can get 65 per cent of a workplace to sign a card, that is a strong bit of evidence that you have more than a majority, easily a strong majority of people in the workplace who want to join a union. I won't get into it with as much colour as I did the last time I talked about it with respect to the fiction around the notion that the big, evil union thug is somehow intimidating the poor worker into signing the card given that, in fact, they have very little access to workers and it's the employer that has control of the workplace.

Nonetheless, what I will say is that 65 per cent was a very pragmatic choice on the part of our then minister, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and ought to have allowed for people to just move on and, in fact, made good labour relations sense on many fronts because it discouraged the polarization and the fighting that tends to occur in workplaces when you have the two-stage process where you compel – even where you have 70 per cent of people signing cards, you still are in a situation where the employer gets another kick at the can to dissuade people from their original indication of wanting a union, and that in and of itself creates discord within the workplaces and enhances labour relations discord throughout the province.

You know what? Folks over there will probably not buy this, but most experts in the field of labour relations will actually say that under NDP governments, labour relations discord, whether in the public or the private sector, tends to go down and productivity goes up. Time lost, strikes, and things that undermine productivity go down because we respect, at the heart, the ability of working people to come together to negotiate their best deal, and we deal with them in a thoughtful, collaborative, evidence-based way, obviously still doing everything you can to get the best deal you can either for the employer in the private sector or the employer in the public sector.

That is why, for instance, we had almost no days lost to strikes even though under the term of our government, strikes in the public sector became legal in Alberta, which they hadn't been for decades. As a result of decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, they became legal. We didn't have strikes. We did zero per cent increases. We had responsible, adult conversations with them, and I actually think that we did a pretty good job of bargaining. We actually modernized the government of Alberta's bargaining tools and the department and the people that did bargaining. We brought

in experts. We did it on a sophisticated basis, and we actually secured some pretty reasonable deals, and we did it without massive work stoppages and the services to Albertans being undermined. This is actually what, you know, experts in the field will look at, governments over the last four years. Many will argue that, in fact, in most cases it's NDP governments that are most successful at maintaining pragmatic and functional and productive workplace arrangements that recognize the rights of people while at the same time getting the work done.

Anyway, that is a bit of a digression, but I will say that it is unfortunate that the members opposite have a very outdated, unsophisticated, hostile view of the role of labour unions and the degree to which they not only represent their members, that they not only ensure that they have more rights, that they not only protect them, but they also provide a thoughtful avenue for managing workplaces in a way that gets more done and more achieved.

4:50 p.m.

Anyway, the final thing that I wanted to sort of say is that Bill 2, not section by section but generally, certainly reflects in large part exactly the kinds of initiatives that were taken by the BFF there of the Premier, Ontario Premier Ford. They, too, introduced, you know, an open for business or selling off our workers act, whatever the heck they called it – I'm not sure which – something like that. I believe it was about a year ago. I guess that now I'll be a bit hypocritical because I'm going to take a page from the government's strategy of just making associative leaps around causation since that's what we've heard from those folks since we've been in this House, in fact before the last election. So why not? What's good for the goose, as they say.

So they brought in – what do they call it, again? – the open for business, selling off workers bill in Ontario, and what has been the outcome? Well, the GDP is down, economic growth has been revised downwards, consumer spending is down, and jobs are not up. The so-called magic formula of Reaganomics was introduced about a year ago in Ontario: a lot of unrest, a lot of discord, a lot of polarization, a tremendous drop in popularity as well for Mr. We Finish Each Other's Sentences. Nonetheless, not exactly a success story for the economy of Ontario.

Now, folks over there might argue: "Oh, that's just ridiculous. You know, the reason Ontario is struggling is because of all these other reasons." But they happened at the same time, so one thing must have caused the other, because I've just spent the last nine days learning at the feet of the experts when it comes to causative and associative conclusions. Having learned that, what I think I can say is that we certainly have seen no evidence of jobs increasing, of people doing better, of higher levels of consumer spending, of higher reports of better quality of life, any of those kinds of things. There's no flourishing new sector in Ontario where they're all saying: "Oh, my goodness, we have all this cheap labour now. It's great. We're so glad to have relocated here from Alabama, and we are going to completely remake the province of Ontario's economic plan." We are not hearing any of that there.

I would suggest, then, that we don't have the evidence to suggest that what this will do is actually grow businesses or increase jobs. What it does do, instead, is that it answers the demands of a small set of folks who happen to also donate a great deal of money to a variety of PACs that supported this government's bid to become government. In so doing, we are unfortunately going after the people who can least afford it, from vulnerable waged workers; from hard-working construction and oil and gas workers, who have been struggling with the consequences and the drop in the international price of oil for some time now; from young people over the age of 18, who are going to actually find it harder to find

work because they have to compete with people that earn less than them; and from those people who earn less than them, who frankly are now going to be encouraged to drop out of school or who are going to find it even more difficult to make their lives better while struggling in the position of being under the care of this government and, through this government, the people of Alberta.

All in all, this is an incredibly misplaced bill, and it hurts people. It picks people's pockets. For the reasons that I've outlined, this government does not have a mandate to do this, and they should therefore not do it. There are many things that they can do and are doing to try and create jobs, but doing this and hurting people when they really did not have a thorough and upfront conversation with Albertans about this before or during the election is unwise, and the people of Alberta deserve better leadership. I believe the members opposite have the opportunity to demonstrate that by withdrawing this bill and going back to the drawing board.

Certainly, what we also know is true is that there were no consultations. There were no extensive conversations with the young people who are being so negatively affected. There certainly were not conversations with labour groups or construction workers or oil and gas workers about how they were looking forward to losing their overtime. You know, the members opposite used to go on endlessly, maybe not quite as long as we have over the last 24, 26, 27 hours – I'll grant you that this is a bit longer than often. But they did go on endlessly about the need for our government to consult more on changes that were being made. Yet this is being brought in with virtually no consultation. It was buried in their Jell-O platform, and then the consequences of it were denied by the leader. There have been no government-led conversations or consultations with people since that time.

I could actually, probably, burn out, I don't know, 60 hours of the clock in one way or another using whatever tool – and there are many – just reading back all the *Hansard* requests for the government to consult with affected people that the folks on the opposite side of the aisle made over the course of the last four years. I mean, that would be fun. Maybe now they should go back to that thing that they thought was so important. I won't do that this time. Maybe later. Certainly, for now we will not do that.

But I think that those members of the House here on the government side who were here before the last election will recall that this was a common theme in the debate that you led, which was about respecting the people of this province and consulting with them in a more significant way about these kinds of changes that would have such a significant impact on them. I would suggest that a 13 per cent drop in pay to young people is a big one. I would suggest that a barrier for 18- to 24-year-olds to now get employment, because they have to compete with people who are paid \$2 an hour less than them, is a big one. I would suggest that \$2,500 over 12 weeks is a big issue. I would suggest that the loss of pay from denying statutory holiday pay to primarily seasonal workers is a big impact. I would suggest that those people have not been thoroughly consulted in any way, shape, or form by this government.

I will argue, then, that that is part of why we are making such an effort to ensure Albertans are aware of exactly how their rights are being breached through this government's proposed Bill 2. That is why I would urge all members to vote for this amendment. This bill should be withdrawn, there should be consultation, and the member opposite should do more research on what the actual practical impact is of the changes around overtime if he genuinely doesn't understand it yet. Again, we should be reconsidering the issues around union certification and also the issues around why we would attack holiday pay of vulnerable workers.

With that, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take my seat and answer any questions or hear any comments anyone may have. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, any speakers? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. While it was a riveting or an interesting idea that the hon. Leader of the Opposition proposed – and I'm sure we would have been very interested in listening to her read all of our comments in *Hansard* over the last four years – I'm going to propose a different direction now and move for unanimous consent that despite what I believe would be Standing Order 7(1), we go back to Ministerial Statements. If the table tells me that I've got the standing order wrong, that would be okay, but that's my motion.

[Unanimous consent granted]

5:00 Ministerial Statements

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

75th Anniversary of D-Day

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day, the Allied landing on the beaches of Normandy that led to the defeat of the Nazi empire, to the end of that terrible tyranny, and to the beginning of the liberation of Europe in the Second World War.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Words can scarcely capture the enormous scale of Operation Overlord, the largest seaborde invasion in world history, as 150,000 troops, including 14,000 Canadians, stormed the heavily fortified German defences along a 100-kilometre stretch of France's northern coastline, supported by 110 warships of the Royal Canadian Navy, five squadrons of Royal Canadian Air Force fighter planes and bombers, and a battalion of Canadian paratroopers in addition to 14,000 soldiers of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and the 2nd Armoured Brigade, together landing at Juno Beach and seizing it from the enemy in a single day, at a cost of more than a thousand Canadian casualties, including 359 killed.

Among the many Albertans who participated in that battle 75 years ago today was Gunner George Lynch-Staunton of Pincher Creek. He narrowly survived and returned home to become a Provincial Court judge and later honorary aide to the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Lynch-Staunton was in the first wave to hit the beach and was almost immediately wounded by a shell explosion that blinded him in one eye. His harrowing account of his captain dying in his arms that day is a moving portrait of the courage and the sacrifice of the Canadian citizen soldiers, the brave men who have fought and died to protect our freedom throughout our history, on that day, and in so many other places.

Ronald Sole of Barrhead was a tank driver with the Fort Garry Horse. In an interview decades later he described in vivid detail the chaos and carnage of the assault, which only he and two other members of his squad survived. After the war Sole initially worked in Edmonton and Camrose as a mechanic, then served as a fish and wildlife officer in various parts of Alberta, and eventually wound up farming until his retirement near Barrhead.

Many Albertans fell at Normandy on this day and many more in the hard fighting that followed before Europe was finally

liberated from the Nazi nightmare, but many more survived, came home, and built the modern Alberta that we know and that we celebrate today.

Mr. Speaker, few of the heroes of Juno Beach are still with us, but I invite all members to join with me in paying homage to them and to all veterans of all of our wars – the Afghan War, the Korean War, the First World War – and other conflicts where Albertans and Canadians have worn the uniform of Her Majesty's Canadian Forces. The decision to serve one's country, to take on the risk and sacrifice that that entails, reveals a lot about the women and men who choose to do so. It demonstrates courage, patriotism, love of community and country, and devotion to the principles of freedom and democracy. Thus, it is no accident that so many of those who make that decision go on after military service to make outsized contributions to our society in civilian life, as did citizen soldiers like George Lynch-Staunton and Ronald Sole.

Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion of Nazi Fortress Europe I urge all members of this House and indeed all Albertans to honour these heroes amongst us then and now. The single most precious thing that we have, our freedom, we owe entirely to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is rising to respond.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Premier for his remarks and for the honour to respond and join him and all members and to add to my earlier remarks. As Her Majesty's Official Opposition liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces it's an honour to rise and pay respect on behalf of all of my colleagues to a very important anniversary that should be acknowledged and honoured in this House and is indeed being honoured today by all Canadians: June 6, 1944, known in the hearts and minds of Albertans as D-Day.

It's important to remember an invasion which marked the beginning of the end of the world war in Europe fought by thousands of brave men and women, more than 4,400 of whom made the ultimate sacrifice and laid down their lives so that the Allies could claim victory, including 359 Canadians. It's important to remember that so many of these women and men left the relative peace and security of their homes in Canada, many barely old enough to vote, to answer the call to defend Canada – our ideals, our democracy, and our freedom – from tyranny, from oppression, and from injustice.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I read about one of these men. Frank Krepps was in France at the height of the war. He had packed his bags and left from Saskatchewan. He was just 17. He had never seen Paris. Today he lives in Red Deer, and he's one of the 36 veterans in the Canadian delegation to return to France today for the formal ceremony. He said, and I quote: in my heart, all of our boys that didn't come home, that's D-Day for me; I'm going over there to say my goodbye.

Mr. Speaker, if we were to walk outside this Chamber, we would only have to go down the steps and into the rotunda of this very building to see the memorials, the flags and their colours, the plaques and the tributes and, above all, the names of those brave Albertans who didn't come home, the names forever memorialized of those who selflessly gave everything that they had, including their lives, so that our generation and all future generations could live in peace, harmony, and freedom. We will remember them.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I'd like to thank the Premier as well as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for both of your tributes and moving words and all members for allowing the Assembly to step out of where we were to do this important remembrance.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2 An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (continued)

[Debate adjourned June 5]

The Speaker: Prior to reverting to Ministerial Statements, the Leader of the Official Opposition had just concluded her remarks on amendment HA. As such, I believe that Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments. Are there any members wishing to do so?

Seeing none, we are on amendment HA. Are there any wishing to speak in debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would just like to thank the hon. Premier and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for their words this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the reasoned amendment on Bill 2. I'd like to use my time today to put Bill 2 into context and to reflect on the recent changes that happened in Ontario with Bill 47, on which this bill was modelled. Since, as we know, both the Alberta Premier and the Ontario Premier finish each other's sentences, I thought it would be interesting to do a comparison between the two bills.

As many members of the Chamber will know well, Ontario finally updated their labour laws in 2017 and brought in the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, known as Bill 148. This act was a significant achievement for working people in Ontario. It was decades in the making. Working people in Ontario celebrated the changes as they were finally being given a fair shake in the economy. But in 2018 Premier Ford and the Ontario Conservatives were elected. The reasons for their electoral success were multiple, but Premier Ford promised the people of Ontario more jobs. The details were scarce, but the people voted for jobs, jobs, jobs.

5:10 p.m.

Shortly after getting elected, Premier Ford's new government took some pretty drastic actions. In 2018 the Ontario Legislature decided to reverse the gains won by hard-working Ontarians with Bill 148. Now, Premier Doug Ford made some pretty bold claims. He told Ontarians, and I will quote: we're getting rid of Bill 148; we're going to make sure that we're competitive around the world. Sounds familiar. He promised more jobs; sounds familiar. Higher standards of living; sounds familiar. A better quality of life; also sounds familiar. He was making Ontario open for business, and working people were going to benefit. It was a great exercise in political communications, to be sure, but the reality of his actions are now being felt by the working people in Ontario.

As I said last night, one of the major things that we've been hearing consistently around Bill 2 here in the Chamber is how important the changes in Bill 2 will be for the hospitality and service industry, but as we know, in Ontario currently the GDP in the area of service and hospitality is actually negative 3 per cent, and the Ford promise is not being delivered as advertised.

Mr. Speaker, what was Premier Ford's promise, and what was in his bill? As I said, he promised jobs, jobs, and jobs. He introduced

Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act. Sounds familiar? I think Alberta's Premier may have borrowed the idea. Some may say that it was vice versa, but I'll leave that matter up for debate. In fact, the bill we are debating today, for the last 24 hours or so, is based on the work done by the Ford government. So what did Ford's Bill 47 do? Well, according to labour activists in Ontario it turns out to be – and I will quote – a sweet deal for big employers, and families got screwed.

Let's look at the details of this Ontario bill and some of the similarities here in Alberta with Bill 2. First of all, the minimum wage was rolled back. In Ontario the legislated minimum wage was rolled back from \$15 an hour to \$14 an hour. Right now in Alberta this UCP government is rolling back from \$15 an hour to \$13 an hour for youth. In Ontario provisions for workers regarding paid sick days were rolled back, as were the rights to use bereavement days for kids' emergencies. In Alberta provisions for workers regarding paid stat holidays were also rolled back. In Ontario the Ford government rolled back the rights of workers to determine whether they should join a union. In Alberta with Bill 2 we are seeing the same initiative to roll back workers' rights when it comes to their choice to decide whether they want to operate in a unionized environment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Ontario's Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act, is not identical to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. There are some differences, but these differences are on the margins. The general policy thrust of both bills is the same, and more interestingly the political communications have been the same. The message is the same, and the message to voters is simple: more jobs, jobs, jobs, and jobs. But let's peel back the onion; the reality is a little more complex. It goes something like this: let's hurt working people, let's roll back wages, and let's take away your banked overtime; then and only then will working people be better off.

[Mr. Jones in the chair]

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know the Ford government, after winning a large majority, isn't quite so popular anymore, and I think that for the UCP that's worth considering. Beyond the sensational headlines and the day-to-day scandals, I think the reason for their decline in popularity is actually pretty straightforward. The Doug Ford promise didn't work. The evidence is out there.

What is the evidence? Well, let's look. If we're going to follow the path of Premier Ford, then let's look at whether or not he's been successful. In Ontario, following the changes introduced by Bill 47, the open for business act, economic growth slowed. Projections have been revised downwards. Ontario is now projected to grow at the slowest rate since 2013 according to Stats Canada. Again according to Stats Canada the unemployment rate in Ontario actually went up as the open for business act gained traction. Is this surprising, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so. It's not a surprise that the economy might suffer when wages for real working people get cut and therefore families struggle to make ends meet.

Now, Mr. Speaker, recall the political promise of the Ford government: jobs, jobs, and jobs. How was this to be achieved? Well, according to the rhetoric it was to be by empowering business. Sound familiar? Quietly, by empowering business, what the Ford government meant was that they were going to punish workers. Sounds familiar. They hoped that the trickle-up strategy to business would eventually trickle back down to workers.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Again, let's look at the evidence in Ontario. Are reductions in wages for working people in Ontario actually trickling up to

businesses and then trickling back down? Let's look at the most recent TD Bank provincial forecast for Ontario. What's changed? Well, Mr. Speaker, they are experiencing a real, pronounced, and significant slowdown in consumer spending. What logical conclusion can we draw? Workers now have less money by virtue of legislation, and therefore those workers, who by definition are consumers, are spending less money, and that's hurting their economy but also the broader business environment.

What else has happened in Ontario? Well, according to the TD Bank business investment has slowed significantly. It isn't a pretty story. And it's not just the TD Bank. Scotiabank has also reported a similar trend. Following the adoption of Bill 47, Ontario's economic growth slowed. Let me repeat that again: according to Scotiabank Ontario's economic growth slowed. Again, not a pretty story.

To my hon. colleagues in this Chamber, I urge you to take a step back and hit the pause button. No, we're not in Ontario – you're right; we're here in Alberta – but you're adopting the same legislation. Let's seriously consider what happened in Ontario when they adopted their piece of legislation. It isn't pretty. It's not going to be pretty.

We can't grow the economy here in Alberta by hurting working people. Hurting young people by picking their pockets isn't the solution. The idea that cutting wages for young people, letting the dollars trickle up and then maybe trickle back down will somehow create a better life for young people and other workers is actually a fantasy. Even Premier Ralph Klein, yes, the king, knew it was wrong and changed the practice. I honestly can't believe I'm saying this, but I think all of you need to listen to Premier Ralph Klein.

Ms Hoffman: So Harper this morning and Klein this afternoon.

Ms Sweet: I know. Harper this morning and Klein this afternoon. I am NDP, I promise.

Mr. Speaker, the idea that we can rob workers of their overtime pay and that somehow this will make these workers better off is also a fantasy. We've seen the evidence. The strategy has been tried before, and the report card is out. The strategy got an F, a failing grade.

Let's not repeat the mistakes of Ontario. Let's not pass Bill 2. Let us continue to stand up for working people, and let's drop the political rhetoric around Bill 2. It's not a saviour piece of legislation that's going to create jobs, jobs, and jobs. It's a piece of legislation that will hurt working people.

I thought we'd moved past this point in Alberta, where we were trying to punish workers just based on an economic strategy, but perhaps we haven't. I guess it remains to be seen. We still have time. We can change our direction. So I urge all the members in this House to use your conscience and protect all workers in this province and vote against Bill 2.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any wishing to make questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any others wishing to debate? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to have the opportunity to be back in the Legislature today to continue on in this important discussion about Bill 2, the somewhat Orwellianly named An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

We've had the opportunity to talk about a lot of different aspects of this bill. I think my colleagues have highlighted a number of different areas, but the one that comes to mind for me, again, is the

impact this could potentially have on youth. You know, just earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of attending the mayor's lunch for Reach Edmonton, Reach Edmonton being a fantastic organization here in the city that works on a number of fronts to create safe and sustainable communities. That involves a lot of different work. They act as sort of an umbrella organization with a number of local nonprofits here in Edmonton. They do specific community work. They've done some fantastic outreach with the Central McDougall Community League here within Edmonton-City Centre, and they've always been a fantastic partner, have always attended when I've had community barbecues.

5:20 p.m.

I really appreciate, in particular, the work they do with youth. Mr. Speaker, Reach Edmonton, as I mentioned, generally work as a partner organization with others. For example, they work with the Africa Centre and the Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area to provide a youth mentoring program, the name of which, unfortunately, is escaping me – perhaps it's my lack of sleep, but at this point I can't recall the exact name of the program – but I know that it is one that has a significant impact.

Particularly, I know, from my work in talking with folks at the Africa Centre, the difference this made in the lives of many young people from the African communities who have been struggling with various issues, whether that's academic, whether that's been family life, whether that's been involvement with gangs and other unsavoury groups, or whether it's been, you know, delving into substance use. Through this program those young people have been able to get ahead, get a good foot up and a leg up. A lot of that, Mr. Speaker, then, will often involve those young people getting the opportunity to begin to get a job and get good work.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues have talked about and as we've discussed here, these youth are coming from new Canadian families, so oftentimes their parents have limited English, limited understanding of the culture. These young people, from a very young age, have been required to be support for their family. They have been translators for their parents. They have sat and provided that bridge for the parent-teacher conferences. In some ways that's where the challenge comes in for some of these youth sometimes in that their parents are struggling, often working multiple jobs at minimum wage or for fairly low remuneration, so these young people are left to take up a lot of slack.

Oftentimes, then, they themselves, you know, once they have worked through some of these issues with the support of an organization like Reach Edmonton, are looking for work and looking for that opportunity to make a living. Mr. Speaker, after all that work they do, after all that time they put in to pull their lives back together, after everything that's invested in them so they can go back and support their family and try to get themselves ahead, a bill like this steps forward and says: and let's pay them \$2 less an hour.

Now, through the Africa Centre, Mr. Speaker, they also have an excellent program, that receives some funding through, I believe, a Canada jobs grant, which works with young people from those communities to help prepare them for better work. They offer them training in writing a resumé, they offer them training in interviewing skills, and they offer them training in computer skills and other things to prepare them for many different opportunities within the workforce.

They also offer mental health first aid training, emotional support resiliency, to prepare these young people to be able to go out and get a job and move ahead. These youth face discrimination sometimes in finding work because they may look a little bit different, because they speak a bit different, because they may

present themselves in a slightly different way because of the culture that they grew up in. Indeed, from the day-to-day pressures of what we recognize, of what we know exists in terms of systemic racism, which can target folks who are new to Canada, it can often be a challenge for them in terms of building up their self-esteem and believing that they are worth having that opportunity and that they deserve to have that chance.

This program, again, Mr. Speaker, invests in them, prepares them, helps them to build these skills so that they can go out and get a good job, and it provides a subsidy to employers to hire those youth and give them the opportunity, and we want to, with this bill, turn to them and say: but your work is worth \$2 less an hour. Somehow the work that these youth would do, what they would bring to the table, is considered more frivolous than if they were a year or two older.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from my colleagues. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Manning just laid out very clearly that initiatives like this are not seeing success. They are not improving the economies in places like Ontario. We heard from the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition today that the issue with youth unemployment in Alberta is clearly not derived from the minimum wage. As we recognize, in neighbouring Saskatchewan they have had a higher youth unemployment rate, and they have a lower minimum wage than we do here in Alberta. While some members, in defending this bill, have shown a penchant for confusing causation and correlation, we recognize that there has not been any evidence so far brought to this House that what they are purporting this bill is going to do is in fact going to occur.

That is one of the main concerns that I have with this bill, Mr. Speaker, and why I have been happy to be part of this opportunity for us to have a very thorough discussion. Indeed, I'm very pleased to see that the broader public has been paying close attention to this debate. Indeed, the Premier himself took the opportunity to recognize that this debate was going on. He suggested that my colleagues and I were here because we were angry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, certainly, I would say that there has been a good deal of passion expended on this bill and, I think, reasonably so. As we've outlined, some of the tenets in this bill I think could be potentially very damaging. But I think we've been relatively measured in our discussions. Certainly, I don't feel that I've personally expressed any anger on this bill. I recognize that I can be a bit emphatic at times, I've been told. My childhood dream of being a preacher one day, of being a youth pastor, is something that may come through a little bit sometimes in my public speaking. I can't say that I could aspire to, say, the level of the great Dr. Martin Luther King or some of the other great black gospel preachers, but it provides perhaps a useful template at times. But even then, you know, those individuals at times were characterized as being angry. It was generally characterized as being angry when people wanted to shut out and turn off and not have to listen to what they had to say.

Now, that's, I think, a common rhetorical practice that we've seen from this particular Premier and this particular government, and fair enough. I recognize that this particular Premier is a gifted rhetorician, and I have the greatest of respect for that. He has the greatest skill in putting forward a narrative, whether one views that narrative as being particularly factual or not, and putting it forward quite emphatically and repeatedly, without wavering, and I can certainly recognize the skill and the ability that's involved in that. But on this particular bill I have to emphatically disagree with this Premier's narrative.

Youth in this province are not facing difficulty in finding employment because of the minimum wage. I emphatically disagree with this Premier's and this government's belief that youth

in this province are facing difficulty in finding work solely because of our government or even with the more moderate version of that that he likes to put forward, that we aren't responsible for everything but that we made a bad situation much, much worse. I fundamentally disagree with that take on things, Mr. Speaker.

As I outlined yesterday in, you know, the discussions on Bill 3, talking about the 4 and a half billion dollar hole that this government wants to punch into our budget to give money away to profitable corporations, we are dealing with a complex number of factors that are interplaying. Certainly, we are dealing with some decisions of previous governments in how they have gone about, I guess, incentivizing, whether by direct action or by indirect action, the types of opportunities available in our economy, the types of opportunities that they provided for young people, recognizing that our energy and resource industry is certainly a fantastic opportunity and avenue for employment, the trades and everything that's associated with that, but recognizing that at the same time it is volatile. In many respects I think we did not properly prepare many, in particular, young men in this province for the realities of that shift, so they were hit quite hard by the world-wide drop in the price of oil.

5:30 p.m.

We see that the youth unemployment rate, which, of course, we recognize, Mr. Speaker, spans up to the age of 24. That includes a number of younger people who wouldn't necessarily be in this category for the question of the minimum wage.

Also on this bill, Mr. Speaker, talking about troubling characterizations or particular narratives, as I mentioned in previous debate, the kind of conversation we've heard from government members when they sat in opposition and indeed at times now about unions and labour in this province, suggesting that in a situation where you have folks who are discussing unionization, generally the situation is that we always have one hundred per cent saintly employers and absolutely evil union thugs – we recognize that neither of those extremes is true.

As I was quite clear yesterday, I certainly respect employers in this province. I respect the people that start businesses and provide jobs for their workers, and I believe that the majority of those individuals are doing so with the right motives and wish to treat their workers well. But I also recognize, Mr. Speaker, that we have all of history to demonstrate that there are and always will be bad actors, and we need to have reasonable protections and balances within the system to ensure that workers have the opportunity to, when necessary, come together and organize, to be able to advocate for their rights, and to look out for their own self-interest.

Indeed, as this Premier knows because he is an incredibly successful organizer – that is another thing I greatly respect about him. He is well known for his ability to organize multiple communities, whether that be folks from various faith communities, whether that be folks from various immigrant communities, and he's very good at working with them to help them come together, generally to advocate for issues that he wishes to move forward, but also very good at bringing them onboard and believing that those are their issues, too. Really, ultimately, that is what it is about with the organizing of a union.

Now, I recognize that we have a difference of opinion between our side of the House and theirs as to, I guess, the validity of card check as a part of that. This government wishes to roll that back and go back to simply having the voting method that existed previously. You know, in the conversations that I've had with both workers in unions and others that have been involved in various situations, I've personally found or what I've heard is that a card check system with a threshold like 65 per cent is one that is reasonable and effective

and gives a little bit more opportunity for workers to be able to organize without fear of intimidation. I've seen and I've had folks reach out to me, Mr. Speaker, who have shown me examples of when they've had employers that have tried to intervene in the process. Again, I don't see this as being a majority, but I recognize that there are some. For that reason, I do not support rolling that back as part of this bill.

My initial thoughts, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Why, thank you to the hon. member.

Statement by the Speaker

Longest Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly

The Speaker: In just one brief moment I'll be happy to call Standing Order 29(2)(a). However, if I can indulge the attention of members just ever so briefly, I would just like to perhaps note, as many of you are adamant observers of legislative history, that just a few minutes ago we passed a certain threshold together.

You may be interested to know about the top five longest sittings we've had here in the history of the Legislative Assembly. I stand to be corrected by the library over the weekend, but here's what I believe to be the longest sessions that we've had. The fifth longest occurred May 9, 2007, when the Assembly convened at 8 a.m. on May 9 and sat till 10:45 a.m. on the 10th. The fourth longest occurred November 9, 1993, when an evening sitting began at 8 p.m. on November 9, and the House rose at 4:11 on the afternoon of November 10. The third-longest sitting occurred on May 28, 2001, when the evening sitting began at 8 p.m., and the House then rose at 5:20 on May 29. The second longest, December 4, 2007: the session started on the 4th at 8 o'clock, and it rose on the 5th at 5:53.

At approximately 5:24 the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre brought us all through a threshold that now makes this the longest Wednesday that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has ever seen. While I offer no comment about whether that is good, bad, or indifferent, I merely observe and am but a humble servant of the Assembly, so only you will decide how much that record is exceeded by.

With that said, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising on a brief question or comment.

Debate Continued

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre a couple of questions. I must say briefly, as a comment before, that I am a veteran of the two longest sittings. I was there in 2007 as well and, of course, here today, so maybe we can make a commemorative T-shirt or something like that. If you can give me your sizes, I will see to that.

You know, it's interesting that when you go through this process, it's cathartic in a way, but it also helps, I think, to sharpen one's senses, ironically, though you might feel tired. What it does do as well, I think, is that it hones the skills of people to be able to think of all angles around a specific issue.

Specifically, on Bill 2 I just wanted to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre to elaborate a bit in regard to the effects of taking the overtime and how he saw that kind of unfold during the course of the election. I found it to be a very interesting experience, to see how people built their budgets for their families or individuals working on projects up north and so forth. I guarantee that you probably ran across the same sort of thing, where people, you know, are counting on banked overtime to do other things and to get time

with their families because, of course, you work in an isolated area and so forth. It's a question of time as well, and it's sometimes a question of being able to work another job even – right? – if you are trying to make ends meet. So all of those things came together. I mean, we have banked overtime for a reason. It just didn't appear out of the air, right? Rather, it was a deliberate and considered way by which to fairly compensate employees. I'm just hoping that the hon. member might give us some further insight in that regard.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It looks like I have a couple of minutes, so I'll just begin by observing, just tagging onto your observations earlier, that it seems to me that in your role, both in observation and in your neutrality, you are somewhat akin in the Legislature to the Watchers of the Marvel Comics universe. Just a thought that occurred to me, probably due to lack of sleep.

That said, on the overtime pay, you know, I appreciate that my hon. colleague brought that up. That's certainly something that I considered and thought about. I was speaking earlier about Reach Edmonton. One of the programs they have is called all-in for youth, in which they provide youth mentors who work in local high schools as part of a program where they provide social service supports not only to the students but also to their parents and families, a very successful pilot program that I'm hoping will see continued investment.

5:40 p.m.

I had a young man who worked in that program who reached out to me to talk about the challenge he faced around the question of overtime because he used banked overtime in order to be able to serve youth. He was set on an eight-hour day, but then often youth that are in need don't follow the clock. So he'd have them come to him at the final hour of the day, and he would need to spend a couple of hours sometimes with those youth. He would do overtime. Therefore, he would bank that overtime, and then he would take that as time off. He came to see me because he was facing a challenge with some of the changes, and he wanted to find a better way forward. What we did was that we sat down with him and we talked about the opportunities for averaging agreements. I helped connect him with officials in Labour, and he was able to get support to have that discussion and look to find a way forward.

But what we did not need to do, Mr. Speaker, is remove a protection that's there, as my hon. colleague said, to protect workers who need that overtime, who count on that pay. We did not have to put people in a position where they could potentially be exploited by an employer, as was laid out quite thoroughly by the Leader of the Official Opposition today. There were options, and there were ways to work around that to adjust those circumstances for what we recognize was a unique situation. That strikes me as being the more reasonable way to proceed on this than simply to tell all Albertans that for some reason an hour of overtime when they've worked it is worth an hour and a half in pay but . . .

The Speaker: Thank you for your comments, Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung is rising to debate.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise on this historic day in this House and, first of all, to acknowledge and thank you for bringing to our attention the sitting record, which we've just set, as the longest sitting in this Legislature. I know I had a chance meeting outside in the hallway earlier this afternoon with the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, and he was asking me, just in passing, how long I thought

we might be sitting today. He was on a later evening shift, apparently. I responded in my role as critic for Agriculture and Forestry as best as I could, saying that it depended upon when the cows came home. We'll find out, I imagine. However, it could be that this sitting goes down in the annals of legislative history as a question in a new version of Alberta Trivial Pursuit or perhaps even a *Jeopardy!* question that Alex Trebek might one day pose to a contestant.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

However, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of the historic nature of today's debate, not only the length of time we're debating here but on the auspicious day that we hold this debate, je voudrais faire une dédication de mes remarques à deux soldats canadiens que j'aimais beaucoup, avec tout mon cœur. Both these Canadian soldiers, who I love with all my heart, suffered greatly in their earlier lives, before serving overseas, in horrendous working conditions.

I'll start first by speaking of my grandfather, who I mentioned earlier, Joseph Edouard Napoléon LaBelle, who went overseas to Dieppe in 1945 and landed not too long after D-Day. Before his service overseas, as I mentioned, he endured horrendous working conditions in Canada, as did countless other Canadians of his generation. He was born in Verdun, Quebec, in 1904 and came with his family to Alberta in 1911, speaking French only until he was about 12 years old. Later on, in 1929 he faced difficulties on his homestead north of Edmonton, in Thorhild, and found that he had to leave for work. He went to the Quebec forest and the bush in Quebec, to lumber camps in the dead of winter in 1929. He got there, Mr. Speaker, not on the Trans-Canada highway, because it didn't exist, of course. The only way to cross the country efficiently then was by rail and steam locomotive. Of course, going to seek your fortune in Quebec to find a job so you could survive and perhaps keep your homestead alive here in those days was something that you did by riding the rails, as they said, meaning you jumped on a moving train and hoped to heck you didn't get kicked off of it till you got to your destination.

He did arrive in Quebec and he worked in the bush in Quebec with poor clothing, bad food, horrendous bosses, and near starvation conditions. I've heard numerous stories from him about that. He survived it, but ended up getting news by way of a letter from my future grandmother and his future wife who clandestinely wrote to him to let him know that during November of 1929 there had been a horrific ground fire in Thorhild that got whipped up by big winds, and the whole town actually went up in flames, the grain elevators, every house, surrounding farms, including the homesteads of both sides of my family. The whole village was gone. Train cars full of paint and other things blew up, and the whole town went down in flames.

My grandfather came back, after enduring those horrific working conditions in Quebec, to nothing. He even had a cache of lumber that he had hoped to build a small house with on his homestead. That burnt up as well. In fact, the only thing my grandparents were able to save from their homestead were the two buffalo robes they buried in the ground as they escaped the flames.

Ms Hoffman: What about the one-eyed pony?

Mr. Dach: The one-eyed pony came much later in history.

I do want to get back and circle back. The reason I bring up my grandfather's hardship is because he endured all that, and generations later we're doing the same thing here in Alberta where we're struggling to improve working conditions for people, and we're facing a government who is wanting to dial back working conditions for workers here in this province. I find it very

disappointing that after all of his struggles and those of my father, the other Canadian soldier I wish to speak about, just two generations later we're suffering the same fate, where this pick-your-pockets bill is making it more difficult for young workers with a wage differential and where people have to bank their overtime at a lower rate, where the minimum wage is being reduced arbitrarily.

On this 75th anniversary of D-Day I think it is a very sad comment that we find ourselves in this Legislature debating a bill that takes us backwards to a time when labour legislation really was much less than it is right now, but going backwards is not the direction that we should be going in. I don't think it's the direction my grandfather or my father had hoped we'd be travelling in 2019.

Now, my grandfather ended up coming to Canada, and he started that homestead. In 1933 he married my grandmother, Winnifred, and in 1935 my mother was born. But a few years later, when she was five years old, they came back from a one-time trip in the mountains in a borrowed car, and the next morning they woke up to an absolute killing frost. Like, their crop was dead. It was nothing. It wasn't salvageable. They didn't know how in the world they were going to survive, and my grandfather blurted out that if he had five bucks, he'd join the army. My grandmother, thinking they'd never take a man who was about 37 years old with about a half-section of land and two farms that he was helping to farm and a wife and child, never thought they'd take him, had saved five dollars for the rolley man who they expected in their absence and who never came. She handed him the five dollar bill and said: "Hey, go ahead. Knock yourself out."

He ended up applying, he was accepted by the military, and he was gone for 62 months. That was in service here, training, first of all, then in England, and then finally landing in Dieppe shortly after D-Day in 1945. That man suffered some horrendous working conditions throughout his life, worked extremely hard, joined in service of his country, and eventually became a successful farmer and, in his later career, the postmaster for the village of Thorhild, which was the final job that he had, a proud member of the postal workers' union.

5:50 p.m.

To the next generation: my father, who did actually join and served in what was then overseas, as described, because Newfoundland was not yet a part of Canada in 1947. He got as far as Newfoundland, and that was deemed to be overseas service during wartime, which qualified him as a veteran. He also served at a time when conditions were difficult and worked before that service in some pretty horrendous working conditions as well. Both of those gentlemen have now passed away, but I remember both of them on this day with fondness and love as I reflect on the bill that we're debating today and the fact that we're going backwards in labour legislation in this province, something that they would be very, very sad to know about. I hope that my contribution to the debate today might make people pause in this province and raise their awareness and give them the voice and allow me to be a vehicle for them to counter the movement of this government towards diminishing the rights and conditions of working people in this province.

Hopefully, the people that are watching this – and I know that the longer this debate has gone on, there's a greater level of public attention that's been garnered. People are starting to pay attention in this province, especially over the last few days. It's really raised and galvanized a lot of people. When they know that it's their kids and it's their grandkids who are being targeted by this legislation, whether it's minimum wage or whether it's the wage differential, they're looking across the street at their neighbour's kids or their own children or grandchildren and saying: hey, this government

wants to take \$4,000 out of the pocket of the young man across the street or my grandkid.

It's the pick-your-pockets bill for sure, and it's a bill that's definitely targeting workers. It's a bill that is basically what I call an open season on the working people and on labour legislation in this province. I'm very sad to say that we've come to this day. On a day when we reflect on the service to Canada that thousands and thousands of women and men dedicated themselves to in a horrific Second World War effort against Nazi Germany, I'm sad to say that we're looking with less than full pride at a piece of legislation that would take us in a regressive way towards a labour law, an environment that they, my grandfather and my father, strove to counter in their generation and hoped that their efforts would have contributed to a more progressive and enduring march towards workers' rights and benefits than we're witnessing here in Alberta today.

Our Ontario cousins are being heralded by our current Premier as being forward looking. In fact, when you do add up all of the measures that are being undertaken by this bill and those that we find in Ontario, the net effect is negative and it does hurt working people. It hurts young people, and it diminishes their ability to save for university, to assist their families. It's something that is being used to pay for large tax cuts that the government tries to tell us are going to incent investment in this country when, in fact, the opposite has been shown to be true. It's with very mixed emotions, Mr. Speaker, that I stand before you today and talk about this bill before us, knowing that the generations of Canadians who fought so hard to protect this country and establish the rights that we have see themselves rolling backwards in time.

I for one intend to do everything I can to follow the direction of my constituents in Edmonton-McClung who have told me to stand firm and make sure that their rights, the rights of their children and grandchildren in terms of labour law, are protected in this province and that we end up looking forward to always improving the rights of workers, the rights to associate, the rights to form a union, the rights to engage in union activities, and the rights to make sure that their working conditions and wages are improved, something that we never forget is a foundational value in this country.

I think that anybody who doesn't recognize the ability to associate and to form a labour union without impediments is somebody who doesn't recognize how important and foundational the union movement is to democracy. It's a pillar of our democracy. It's the foundational right of association that many, I think, across the aisle in the UCP government fail to value, and I think that's something that we as the NDP opposition will continue to counter. Hopefully, we'll be reaching those that are most affected by this legislation and garnering an unstoppable force so that in the next four years the sides have changed, Mr. Speaker, and we'll once again be sitting to your right and, in terms of labour legislation, turning the clock forward.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments. Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his comments. I feel like I'm getting to know his family much better through some of the narratives that he's sharing about hardship and perseverance and determination and, certainly, about connections to homesteading in Alberta. I was wondering if the member might wish to comment more about the importance of having fair compensation for fair work with regard to his rural connections.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been fortunate enough to capture many of the stories and many of the historical moments of my grandparents in particular on a tape, which I quoted a couple of times. I think it probably might be within the rules of the House to expect me to table five copies of those tapes once I can get them transferred onto an electronic device that I think the library could potentially house, and if indeed that's Mr. Speaker's expectation, I would see fit to undertake to get that done. I do have a copy of the tape that, I think, would be copiable, and I have already spoken with the library of the Edmonton public school board and McKay Avenue school to seek assistance in making copies of that tape so that it could be housed in the library there as well as here if required as a tabling.

The working conditions over generations, of course, have improved in this province, but that's a direction that we should continue to go, and going backwards is not something that Albertans elected this or any other government to do in terms of labour legislation. When we come to think about a wage cut – and we have different arguments on both sides of the House in terms of what the relative benefit or harm might be – I believe that our arguments carry the day when it comes to knowing that particularly the young people, who suffer a \$2-an-hour wage cut as a minimum wage earner, almost \$4,000 a year, are probably sitting in disbelief and wondering why in the world their government would see fit to do this to them.

I think those young people who are under 18 years of age right now who are feeling victimized by this government's move to reduce their minimum wage, those single moms struggling to keep their families afloat who were suffering the same indignity, those individuals who are trying to go to university by saving up enough money in a minimum wage job who see the legs cut out from underneath them by this draconian cut to their minimum wage earnings: all of these people are really, really feeling disappointed, Mr. Speaker, in today's legislation that we are so strongly opposed to.

6:00 p.m.

I think the population of this province will recognize that we are absolutely committed to having their back and ensuring that somebody stands up for working people in this province. It certainly isn't the government because this legislation is an attack on working people. It's a threat to labour peace in this province as well. I know that everybody is watching what Alberta is going to be doing. We know on this side of the House that we're doing everything we possibly can to raise awareness of the damage that it's going to do to the pocketbooks of people who are affected but, not only that, also to the rights that we enjoy under our Canadian Bill of Rights and labour legislation. They're being chipped away at, chipped away at by this government, who doesn't see fit to recognize the value of individual working people. They see fit, certainly, in ensuring that corporations get 4 and a half billion dollars in tax cuts, but they're going to pay for it by having our kids and grandkids take a wage cut, by having our kids and grandkids suffer a wage differential even though they're doing the same work at the same place of employment, by having our working people have overtime . . .

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak on the amendment? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House to support the amendment to Bill 2. I think this is a very reasonable amendment proposed by my colleague. I don't find there's any

reason not to support the amendment on this particular bill that takes very important changes in hand.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to remind that we all celebrate Labour Day in Canada to commemorate and to pay tribute to all the sacrifices, struggles behind all the achievements the labour movement has had. Eight-hour working days, regulating that all workers can get paid overtime, and how they're entitled to get stat holidays: these achievements were not made in one single day or one month. There is a history behind them. People advocated, people struggled for centuries and centuries for this, and it took the precious lives of great, I would say, leaders, workers to achieve these achievements so that the ordinary people, the ordinary workers of any province, any country, any state can have a respectful working environment and can find a decent job to live a respectful life.

The changes proposed by this bill I would see as not really backed by evidence, and that's why it's lacking even a guarantee that it will bring the kind of proposal this bill is showing, a guarantee that it will contribute, attract investment, or that it will stimulate any kind of employment or create jobs.

Looking at all the proposals in the bill and the kinds of changes in hand, I think that this amendment is a very, very reasonable amendment to the bill. By not accepting this amendment, it will give just a very, very wrong impression that we are not really serious, that we are just kind of trying to push something that is driven by their ideological or their philosophical belief. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning already highlighted, you know, that the Ford government, in the direction they have taken in Ontario, is very similar. We have seen the changes, not exactly but in the same directions, and that did not really contribute anything that was proposed, that they will create more jobs. Instead, they are contributing more loss of jobs, and that's why even the Ford government, which just came into power not very long ago, are losing their popularity very, very fast.

This bill proposed, you know, wage cuts to youth workers, union rights on collective bargaining. As I already mentioned, that is a hard-fought right that workers have. That's the only right that guarantees to them they can stand up for their rights and that they have a right to negotiate their salaries and their benefits. Not giving enough time and just trying to, it seems like, push this bill through the sitting, it's probably not driven by very – I don't know – reasonable or good faith. We are not trying to achieve anything by passing this bill in a rush. We should give enough time to see. We have already passed a bill. We are already discussing so much that Bill 2 already proposed. Bill 3 proposed the largest, you know, tax giveaway to corporations and that it will create jobs. We have a number of changes going through this House, and we have a reason to see those things, how they move forward, and we have plenty of time to work on these things. Not giving emphasis to this amendment will somehow show that this is kind of a systematic attack on workers' rights, workers' achievements that they have fought very hard for for years and years, for, I will say, centuries.

I will say that it was my privilege, my pleasure, and my honour to rise in the House and speak in support of this amendment. I will encourage and request all my colleagues, on both sides of the House, to please support this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration standing to speak.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a few moments to set the record straight concerning comments made by the members opposite. I would like to discuss two items: first, the

youth job-creation wage and, second, to touch on comments that have been made concerning red tape.

Now, the hon. member suggests that the minimum wage has no impact on employment. I'd like to make a couple of comments about that. First, the hon. members are avoiding the findings of independent third-party research. I noted in my earlier remarks, Mr. Speaker, that Canadian empirical research has generally found that a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage reduces employment among teens by 3 per cent to 6 per cent. This is not research conducted by advocacy groups. Rather, this includes studies by the Bank of Canada and academic studies such as one published in the *Journal of Labor Economics*.

Now, I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there is some debate among economists on this issue. Certain studies have suggested that a modest – and I repeat: modest – increase in the minimum wage may have limited negative impacts on the number of jobs. However, let's be clear. What was done by the previous government was not a moderate increase; rather, this was a significant increase by nearly 50 per cent in a few short years in the face of a tremendous economic downturn. This theory was borne out by studies conducted by the Calgary Chamber. Calgary businesses did in fact lay off or reduce job opportunities for Albertans as a result of the minimum wage, and youth in particular were hit hard. The fact is that this increase in the minimum wage and other changes, such as changes to the general holiday pay, negatively impacted jobs in Alberta. Youth were those the most impacted.

6:10 p.m.

Now, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has suggested that we reduce the minimum wage to zero dollars an hour to create more jobs. Mr. Speaker, let's be reasonable. We are suggesting \$13 an hour, and this remains one of the highest minimum wages in the country. But let's apply that thinking in reverse. Let's say that the NDP increased the minimum wage to \$20 an hour, \$30 an hour or, let's say, even to \$50 an hour or that the minimum wage was a hundred thousand dollars for every employee in Alberta. Would jobs stay? Would employers actually pay these wages and still remain open for business? That's certainly not the case, and Albertans have more common sense than that. The minimum wage has an impact on jobs. The theory supports this, our experience in Alberta supports this, and sadly the opposition cannot see this. Again, our focus is about creating opportunities for the thousands of Albertans, particularly youth, who do not have a job, giving them the experience and the skills they need to prepare for the future.

One other topic I would like to just touch on and briefly talk about is red tape. It has been suggested by the hon. members opposite that these changes we are suggesting in Bill 2 will create a tremendous amount of red tape. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is not the case. Regarding the youth job-creation wage, we spoke to a number of employers in Ontario. Their HR systems manage this seamlessly. Payroll systems are available and designed to handle these types of policies and can be modified to do this and, once modified, handle them automatically.

Regarding general holiday changes we're suggesting, we are simply reverting to the rules that were in place for years, and actually these rules were in place only a couple of years ago. Payroll systems were in place to manage these systems then. They can be put back in place now. The same applies for systems to manage changes to banked overtime. Once again, this was in place a couple of years ago and was in place for quite some time prior to that. The argument that these changes will create a significant amount of red tape, again, is not the case.

Our focus, Mr. Speaker, is about creating jobs for Albertans and, in particular, our youth. It is also about creating greater flexibility

for workers and employers and supporting workers' rights. This was a commitment made in our platform. The hon. member suggests through this amendment that we should wait six months. I submit to you that our youth can't afford to wait. We need to get Albertans working and get our youth working again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Other members wishing to continue in the last 30 seconds under 29(2)(a)?

Other members looking to speak to HA? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the floor.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to going back to my constituency this weekend and telling my constituents that I just heard 60 people applaud cutting wages for 17-year-olds by 15 per cent. That certainly will not go over very well with the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I think that it won't go over very well with most of the people in Alberta once they find out what the members opposite have done.

Before I make my comments, I want to just respond to some of the things that the Member for Calgary-Varsity raised in his response to the comments made by my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows. You know, he talks about the minimum wage and the fact that all reasonable people agree that raising the minimum wage has a negative impact on jobs.

I want to say a couple of things. First of all, you know, as I've mentioned in my comments before, Ontario has actually looked at this issue of whether or not the student minimum wage has had a positive impact on youth employment. There was a report generated by the Ontario government. I believe the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has shared that with members of our caucus. In fact, they can find no discernible effect on youth employment by providing a student minimum wage. The people who have reviewed the impacts of the student minimum wage have actually recommended that it be removed and that students be paid the same minimum wage as every other worker who is paid the minimum wage. I think it would be interesting for the Member for Calgary-Varsity to obtain a copy of that report and perhaps read it over the weekend and rethink this issue of the minimum wage, because if he thinks that reducing the wages for 17-year-olds by \$2 an hour is going to have a positive impact on youth employment, he's dead wrong, and there are solid facts to support that.

You know, on the other issue around red tape and changing systems, that these were systems that were in place a couple of years ago so it's not a very big deal to go back to them, obviously he's never had to change the payroll system of any organization in his career. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I got an earful from my mother when we made the changes to the general holiday pay. My mother is a payroll clerk for the St. Albert public school board, and she had to spend a significant amount of time updating the payroll systems for the St. Albert public school board to change the banked overtime and the general holiday pay rules, and now she's going to have to spend a significant amount of time reverting to the rules that were in place.

When I say "significant," this is not a couple of hours or a couple of days. This is many weeks of work that she had to expend making these changes, which is especially frustrating because we know that the Minister of Education is going to be taking an axe to the budgets of the school boards in this province. So now people, like my mother, who are in charge of payroll in school boards will have to go back and do the work that needs to be done, spending precious resources that could be better directed to supporting students in classrooms. I don't think that's what anybody in this House wants, so that's why I think it's important to support this amendment, Mr.

Speaker, because those are some of the unintended consequences of this bill that I think need to be examined before members pass it.

You know, the main focus of the comments that I wanted to make with respect to this amendment and why I think that it wouldn't be prudent to read this bill for a second time now but to wait six months and examine the impacts of this bill are the rules around overtime. I had the opportunity to listen to some discussions undertaken by a man named Nick Hanauer. Some people in this Chamber may know him. He's a venture capitalist from Seattle and also an advocate for better wages and working conditions for people in the United States of America. He said that one of the things that occupies his time as a manager of a successful multibillion-dollar business is managing overtime, that in fact when companies have to pay their employees a premium, they manage their overtime very carefully because it affects the bottom line quite significantly.

But when the rules are changed and overtime costs the same as regular time, well, then that creates an incentive for employers to just run their employees ragged and not carefully manage their overtime. And, perversely, it doesn't actually make it easier for them to hire people and create more jobs, Mr. Speaker, because if you've got two people who you can work for 60 hours a week, that's a lot easier, for a number of reasons, to manage than three people who are working 40 hours a week.

So that's the system that this bill is going to set up. We had a temporary reprieve from it for a couple of years, where people, you know, could bank their overtime hours at a 1.5 to 1 ratio and people were getting compensated fairly for their work. But there is no evidence to suggest that reverting to a 1 to 1 overtime banking ratio will create more jobs. In fact, it will actually just increase the incentives for employers to run their employees ragged and take advantage of them.

6:20 p.m.

It actually creates financial incentives to hire fewer people and make them work longer hours, which is exactly the opposite of what the members on the Treasury benches say they want to do. They want to create jobs, but here they are passing overtime banking legislation that will create a financial incentive for employers to not create jobs.

You know, I understand that people elected the members opposite to create jobs – that was their big promise – but here we have in this bill a financial incentive for employers to do the exact opposite of what the members on the Treasury benches say they want to do. I think people will be very upset to find out that they're trading in lower wages and not seeing their friends and neighbours going back to work as a payoff for that, that a lot of people will be made worse off and that nobody will be made better off as a result of this.

That's why I think it's important to not read this bill a second time but to take six months, actually engage in consultation with employers, see how they manage their overtime, talk to them and get a sense of whether or not limiting overtime banking to a 1 to 1 ratio will have a positive impact, do an analysis of the employment impacts where this has been in place, and do a crossjurisdictional analysis to see whether or not different overtime banking regimes have a positive effect.

It's interesting to me that, you know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's bromantic partner, Doug Ford, created an open for business act that didn't actually affect the overtime pay for people in Ontario. People in Ontario can still bank their overtime at a 1 to 1.5 ratio, and in fact unemployment in Ontario is much lower right now than it is here in Alberta. What is it that's magical about overtime banking in Alberta that's preventing employers from hiring more people and that's not preventing those same employers from hiring more people in Ontario? I would like, you know, to

engage in some consultations and understand completely what it is that may make the Alberta labour market unique to justify this move to banking overtime rates at a 1 to 1.5 ratio.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I also want to revert to some comments about the minimum wage in relation to Ontario. The Member for Calgary-Varsity says that they modelled the minimum wage on the Ontario program. As I mentioned earlier in my comments, when I looked at the minimum wage structure in Ontario, I see that Ontario froze their minimum wage to \$14 an hour for the calendar year of 2019, but they're committed to raising all minimum wage earners' wages by inflation from 2020 on. It's legislatively tied to inflation.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity should know and everybody here knows that our minimum wage is not linked to inflation. So what is the plan of the members opposite for making sure that people who – and I really do hope that these measures create jobs. Like I said, I'm very skeptical, but if they do, what's, then, the plan of the members opposite for making sure that those minimum wage earners don't fall further behind? You know, the cost of living is going to continue to increase, as it always has, here in Alberta, and especially if the economy picks up again, the cost of living will go up quickly.

What is the Member for Calgary-Varsity's plan to make sure that minimum wage earners don't fall further behind? If he actually structured the minimum wage program to closely model the Ontario plan, he would have linked it to inflation so that at least people who were getting into the minimum-wage work at \$13 an hour, instead of the \$15 an hour that they were originally promised, would have some light at the end of the tunnel. They would know that they're taking a temporary pay cut, that over time their wages would increase with inflation, and that at least they wouldn't be falling further behind than the 15 per cent cut that they're putting them at. But they're not doing that, Madam Speaker.

I really question whether or not they're sincere in their attempt to use the minimum wage cut as a way to increase employment. I wonder if it's actually caving in to the corporate lobbyists that have advocated vociferously on their behalf, like Restaurants Canada, who have long advocated for minimum wage decreases and certainly are major opponents to minimum wage increases. That would be interesting to know, Madam Speaker.

I have to say, you know, that the restaurant industry is not unified on this issue, on the issues around minimum wage and overtime pay. The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had a very well-attended press conference earlier today with a lot of restaurant owners, in fact, here in Alberta who support a \$15-an-hour minimum wage for all. I'm glad that we have restaurant owners who understand that paying their employees a fair wage is better for their own business and better for the communities that they serve.

I'm privileged in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar to have a restaurant called Cartago. The owner of that restaurant ran an op-ed in the Postmedia outlets during the election campaign speaking out against Restaurants Canada's move to reduce the minimum wage, and she wrote at length about the benefits that her restaurant has seen by paying their employees a fair wage. They have a lot less turnover. You know, it takes a significant amount of time to hire and train somebody to do the work well in a restaurant, and once you've put that effort in, Madam Speaker, it's beneficial to her as a restaurant owner to be able to keep those people on staff.

By paying them a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, she's seen a lot of retention in her employees, so she doesn't have to waste a lot of time and energy continually retraining new people to do the same

tasks. She also knows that her people are happier when they're coming to work and able to support themselves and their families on the wages that they're earning at her restaurant. They have less stress in other areas of their lives, so they're better employees. They work better with their colleagues, and they provide better service to their customers because they're much happier people. That improves the restaurant.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, please remember to table the documents that you referenced in your speech.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for your analysis. You know, some edification around real-life examples: I think that helps to have any given bill sort of jump off the page and become real either through stories or concrete examples of how people might be benefiting from the protections that the current labour reforms do allow and/or how individuals might be exposed in the absence of those protections. I was interested to hear about your example of a restaurant that you have in your constituency. I just fail to remember the name of it. I just was intrigued to know about the quality of life that paying a fair living wage does afford restaurant workers and how that will benefit or translate into a successful, more stable business environment, especially for the restaurant industry.

I think many of us at some point in our lives have experienced working in restaurants, and you know that, for example, if you're not being paid very much, you rely on gratuities. The gratuities and tips come and go, and it can be a feast or a famine, quite frankly. When we look for ways by which to make life better for Albertans, I mean, these sorts of regulations and standards for protections are significant. If you just perhaps could edify us a little bit more on that area of discussion that you were just engaged in, I would be grateful.

6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for his thoughtful questions. You know, certainly, one of the things that we heard when we embarked on this project to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour was that tips were going to dry up, that because restaurant workers were going to be so highly paid, nobody would be able to afford to leave tips for restaurant workers anymore. The Member for Edmonton-North West touched on tips and how unreliable a source of income that can be for people who work in the restaurant industry.

Certainly, it was interesting to me that, you know, this restaurant that I mentioned opened up in my constituency a couple of years ago. They knew full well that the minimum wage was at \$12 an hour, I think, at that time and going to \$15. That didn't impact their business plan, and in fact it's probably one of the most successful restaurants in my constituency. I drive past it regularly, Madam Speaker, and morning, noon, and night that place is hopping.

I'm glad to see that businesses can be successful while paying their workers a fair wage. That's something that we've always talked about – we've talked about this in Bill 2; we've talked about it in Bill 3, the tax giveaway bill that's proposed – that businesses can be successful while their employees are successful, too. Everyone benefits when that's the case, and that's why we wanted to raise the minimum wage and create an economy that works for everybody and doesn't just select the wealthiest top percentages of the population, that actually lifts people up out of poverty and

creates those opportunities that would be denied them in other circumstances because they didn't have the finances to take advantage of them.

You know, certainly, the facts bear out what we've seen with this particular restaurant in my constituency, Madam Speaker. Even though Alberta has gone through a very difficult recession, restaurant receipts are up to record levels. They've been doing very well in tough economic times and at a time when wages for their workers have been going up. I think that that's a tremendous success story that needs to be more widely shared and not taken down.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any more speakers to the hoist amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to colleagues who've participated in this debate thus far on Bill 2 and, specifically, the hoist amendment, which reads: "Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business" – a.k.a. the pick-your-pockets bill; it doesn't actually say that in the amendment, but that's the vernacular – "be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

I want to say that it's been quite an exciting week. Oh, first I want to say that I just noticed that it must be a date night for the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods because I see her husband is looking adoringly from the gallery. I imagine other people's spouses might be watching on their phones or other ways. Anyway, it must be date night. That's what I wanted to say.

Now I want to get back to what an enlightening week I think it has been. I want to start by saying that on Monday the Speaker introduced the family of William Daniel Dickie, the former Member for Calgary-Glenmore, and we had an opportunity to hear about some of his legacy. Of course, one of the pieces of his legacy was bringing forward a motion to create and publish *Hansard*. I can't actually read the debate from the debate about creating *Hansard* because, of course, it wasn't created yet, but I imagine that some of the discourse was probably around: "You know, it'd be a nice idea. It'd be really interesting. It's probably going to cost way, way, way too much money because, of course, we'd have to pay people to create *Hansard*." But I think that there is value in doing things that cost money. I think there is value in paying people for their work.

I want to say that one of the other things I found enlightening just a few minutes or hours ago – it's hard to tell the difference some days. The Speaker referenced that this has been the longest consecutive sitting of the Legislature in Alberta history. He referred to the sitting in December 2007 in which the Member for Edmonton-North West, then the Member for Edmonton-Calder, was an active participant. Because we have *Hansard*, because of Mr. Dickie, I was able to go back and look at some of the history of that night's debate.

For the recollection of all members here, I think it's important that we consider the historical context we are in today, which is a great sense of concern being raised by the opposition, as there was in 2007. In 2007 the bill that was being considered was the Alberta Utilities Commission Act. It was introduced, actually, on June 14. Here we are in June as well. Because there was so much concern initially on June 14, the government chose to wait until November to bring it back for second reading. It was in second reading for two days in November, a third day in December, and then, depending on how you read the days, December 3, 4, and so on. When I had a chance to do a little scanning of the *Hansard*, bills that had this much concern or at least the last one that had the House go almost as many hours as this House is going – I looked a little bit at some

of the back and forth and what happened during that debate that night and then the days that led up to it.

One of the things that I found very interesting is that – again, I haven't read quite all of the *Hansard* yet, but I imagine there will be more time in this place to read more of the *Hansard* – as I read, it appears that there were at least 24 government amendments brought forward to that bill, the bill that initially had concerns raised, concerns brought forward. The government tabled it, took some time to think about what to do, and then came back with a number of amendments because the government had some concerns. Eventually it did pass – it absolutely did – after that very, very late night sitting, which the Member for Edmonton-North West, I'm sure, recalls with great precision, all of the details of that night's debate. Eventually it did pass. But there were, it appears, at least 24 government amendments brought forward to that bill because there was so much concern about it.

What I want to say is that just because a bill has been presented and because it's already made its way through cabinet for recommendation to this House, it doesn't mean that we need to pass it in its current form. I know that there are many members here who probably feel pressure to do so, but I want to say: feel free to look at the *Hansard*. Feel free to see all of the additions that government members brought forward to try to take a bill that had a great deal of concern to the people of this province – some were probably in the government members' own ridings at the time. Think about ways that you might be able to help make people at home feel excited about this bill. I'm sure that the members who were part of the debate back in 2007 were initially excited or at least thought they should be excited, but when they had a chance to see just how much concern and outrage there was in their communities and across Alberta and how many issues had been raised, they certainly paused, took some due consideration, and they themselves created a number of amendments to bring it back, to try to make it better.

I am saying that I recommend this hoist for the reasons that my colleagues have already mentioned. Also, I think it would behoove us – it gives us an opportunity, rather than having to work through the messy amendment process, which, of course, we will do if that's what happens, for government to take the opportunity, through this hoist, to actually develop a bill that they can be excited about and that I think they can sell with confidence rather than saying, as the Member for Lethbridge-West mentioned earlier – I know we've talked about pick your pockets or take your toonies. All those young people who are living in our ridings who weren't old enough to vote in this last election but will certainly be old enough to vote in the next election: they will absolutely be old enough to vote in the next election, and they will have opinions about the way that they have been treated by their government. I think that it would be of benefit for us to take the opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned, number one, because of Mr. William Daniel Dickie's motion to create *Hansard* and, number two, because of our ability to actually learn from history and not repeat the errors of the past.

6:40 p.m.

A few of the areas that I think require a significant re-examination and reflection. I would hope that individuals, either through government amendments or through passing this hoist amendment, then take the opportunity to bring back something. Specifically creating a class for discrimination based on age: I think that's a big old red flag. I think you've heard that from many of us, and I imagine you're probably hearing it from some people in your own constituencies as well. That would be one area that I would imagine would be some room for consideration.

When I'm thinking about the progress that we've made on human rights – and I know other people have talked about this. I can't help

but think about how – it depends on how long you imagine history being, but not that long in world history has it been since we said: it's wrong for kids to work in unsafe work conditions; it's wrong for kids to work in coal mines. And I imagine that if there was *Hansard* for the day, there would have been extensive debate saying: you know, of course, we don't want to treat kids this way, but it's just not the right time. So to say to kids, "Of course, we don't want to make you a lesser class of citizen, but it's just not a right time to treat you equally in terms of your pay for your work," I think, is problematic. I think we have an opportunity to pass this hoist and then take the opportunity to rewrite this in a way that doesn't create that case for discrimination based on age.

I think our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, did a really lovely job of describing the two different scenarios – two children, very similar and very different in many ways, one who started working at a young age, one who was going to start working this summer at not quite as young an age – that difference between being under 18 and being over 18, and how not only will discrimination based on age for income, by lowering the minimum wage for youth workers, create a disadvantage for those youth because they're taking less money home, but it also has the potential to create a disadvantage for people over 18 because they could be seen as: you know, is it really worth that extra \$2 to pay somebody because they're a little bit older? So it can work for grounds for discrimination on the other side of that toonie as well, both sides of the toonie working against regular workers here in this piece. That's one of the major areas.

Of course, the other one is around overtime pay. I know that I have already touched on some of my concerns around the seasonal worker piece, but I do need to reiterate that that requirement for 30 days of employment before a statutory holiday, qualifying for statutory holiday pay, I think, is mean, and I don't think it, again, respects young people. I think a lot of young people and, actually, probably a lot of older people as well like to work seasonal work. I know of a number of retired folks who don't mind spending a few months in the garden centres, right? They're kind of keen to spend some time in the garden centres, pick up some extra cash, pick up these fun, seasonal opportunities for employment, and it certainly could create an uneven playing field both for them as well as for the youth worker.

Then, of course, the general overtime pay provisions: moving from time and a half to straight time, I think, is again a direct attack and something that creates a very uneven financial situation for the people of Alberta compared to virtually every other Canadian jurisdiction. I think that we shouldn't be striving for the lowest standard; I think we should be striving for – I think the Minister of Transportation said, "Just achieve average," when he was debating last night. That was one of the things his constituent said: just be average. Well, I will tell you that this proposal is far below average. Going from time and a half, which is essentially the Canadian standard, to straight time is undercutting the value of the workers that all of us represent in our ridings and across the province.

Then the last piece, of course, is some of the attacks on the rights of workers to organize. I have a colleague and friend who is a labour lawyer, and when I said, "Why did you go into labour law? Were your parents union members, or did you grow up with parents who were working as labour lawyers?", that friend said: "No, actually, not at all. I was really interested in human rights law, and I saw that it's the union that actually drives a lot of human rights cases." Ordinary folks can't afford to get a human rights lawyer on their own individual salaries, but if we pool our resources together, we have the ability to fight for one another and to create a stronger world. Inspired by some of the French I heard earlier: nous sommes plus forts ensemble. We are stronger when we are together.

I think that it is an affront to the rights of people to organize to say that we're going to move back and take away your rights to be able to organize in a timely fashion. I think the 90-days piece is a concern. I think getting rid of the card check is of concern to me and I know to many people who want to have the right, if they're being discriminated against, to exercise their human rights to organize and to fight for fairness. That's, to me, what a lot of the union workers I've met over the years have done.

Some of my first exposure to union workers: of course, my parents were both teachers, and both of them were members of the union. There were times when they had to turn to their association, to their union and get some support, and rightfully it was there for them and it had their backs. The same when I was with the Edmonton public school board. I spent a considerable amount of time with the ATA but also with the three different CUPE locals that were represented there. CUPE 3550: these are the educational assistants and the admin staff in schools. They're not exactly people that would typically, walking down the street, make you think: oh, there's a union thug. This is the lady who greets you and your family when you drop your kids off at school. This is the person who helps a child with a disability be toileted during recess. This is the person who makes sure that somebody with a disability has an opportunity to learn how to read. These are a lot of – often women, but not always – the kinds of unionized folks that I spent time with.

When I asked about their history with becoming organized as a group, they said: well, members of the board didn't respect us, they didn't respect our wages, they were rolling them back, and it was important to us that we stand together. Somebody actually, one of the board members, maybe even the chair at the time, said: well, this is just to give I think it was pin money to moms who don't want to have to ask for extra allowance from their spouses. Well, I'll tell you, that mobilized those women and the men who also worked with them. They were deeply offended by that, and they knew it was important that they have a united voice and the ability to fight for fairness for them because, honestly, the working conditions of our educational assistants in our schools are the learning conditions of those kids they are tasked to work with. Attacking the right to organize, I think, is an affront to fairness in our society.

All of this being said, the last time in Alberta history when we went on this long for debate, it resulted in the government having some reflection and coming back with 24 amendments to their own legislation. We can either pass this hoist tonight – you can go home, and you can think about this and talk about it with each other about ways that you can amend this bill to come up with something that you're more proud of – or you can vote to pass it through all stages as quickly as you physically can. But at the end of the day, I know that I talked to my loved ones, and I know how important it is for me to be able to say that I did what I thought was right.

There will be times where you will be left with the decision to say, "I did what I was told" or "I did what I thought was right." I think it is very important that all of us be able to go home to our communities and to our loved ones and be able to say: I did what I thought was right. This is an opportunity to do this, hon. members. I think you've seen the commitment that we in this House and I know many others across this province have to make sure that we have fairness and that we have, I would say, as the Minister for Transportation said, an average playing field. That was what his constituent aspired for him to achieve. I think what we have is very fair and reasonable and many would say average, and I think what this bill proposes is to bring us back and to reduce that threshold.

I think that's what I wanted to say.

The Deputy Speaker: Perfect timing. Standing Order 29(2)(a), comments and questions. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for her remarks. I'm hoping to tap into her experience being a school board trustee and, of course, the chair of the public school board. With 26 schools in my riding I'm very proud, very excited about the students that go to these schools. One of the things that we talked about during this entire debate is, of course, about creating the jobs, but I still fail to see any discussion around the students 17 years of age that already have jobs and why they should maybe be consulted around this legislation. With your experience in the school board you obviously have had multiple, multiple chances to be around students, to talk with students, to find out how they view things. I was wondering if you might be able to share some of those experiences about how important it is to tap into our young emerging leaders and how we can form legislation.

6:50 p.m.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Maybe I'll tell one quick story about during the campaign period, not that long ago. We know spring break fell in the middle of that campaign period, but the first Monday after spring break, in Edmonton anyway, I happened to be at Westmount mall. Busy place, especially during the lunch hour, when the students from Ross Shep high school across the street have their lunch break. That food court is packed, and it is a hopping place. A few of the students recognized me because I've been around the community for years. I was over chatting with them, and I said a couple of things that I thought that they should be thinking about as they head into the election. One, I said, "There's a proposal to roll back your wages." They said, "That's not fair." I said that, two, there were considerations around GSAs that were, in my opinion, going to be threatening, and now we've seen through the introduction of Bill 8 that certainly they are very threatening. I heard somebody actually already refer to it as Bill Hate, so that's interesting. Then the third one I mentioned was provincial achievement tests and how diploma exams are going to go back to 50 per cent.

I have to say that the response and reaction from those youth were amazing. We had a really interesting debate. One said: "Well, but why would they want to do that? What would be the benefit?" I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to talk about diploma exams another day. I said, "Well, they say that if you get paid less, there will be more jobs." They said: "Are you kidding me? Like, we have four people that work our shift at the restaurant. How are there going to be more jobs? We don't need five people. If we have five people, I'm going to have less work. You staff the people that you need at your business to support the supply and demand situation that you have there." So I thought it was pretty interesting.

Anyway, it evolved to a number of them saying: "Where's your office? I want to come and volunteer." That was a lovely surprise and a pleasant treat, and I really enjoyed working with them. I'm grateful that they helped me get back here. Those are the kinds of people that I'm fighting for every day, and that's why we've been here for the longest Wednesday in Alberta history. It's going to be an interesting one, folks.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: About a minute and a half under 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, any speakers to the hoist amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to the amendment, this hoist amendment, and to the broader bill. I'll try to keep my comments fairly concise, but I just want to start, actually, with the title of this bill, An Act to Make Alberta Open for

Business. Now, I've read through this a couple of times and, quite frankly, still fail to see how this is making Alberta more open for business. There's nothing in here about, you know, what work the government could be doing to attract new investment here in the province, how it's supporting new businesses, whether start-ups or companies that are looking to scale up, or how it is making it easier or better for businesses to do business in Alberta.

Now, Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to live in the best province in the country to start a business, to live, work, and play and recognize that although we are the best, there's always room for improvement and ways to make things better. Now, for me one of the challenges of this bill – and I'll just jump right to it – is the full-frontal attack on working people. During the election campaign I do not recall the Premier nor this UCP party, now government, then party, telling Albertans that they were going to roll back or give employers the option to pay out banked overtime at straight time.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that every Albertan that I've spoken to relies on their overtime pay to pay their bills. That's part of the reason they take certain jobs that they do. This applies heavily to our energy sector, which, of course, is our largest sector in Alberta and really the driver of our economy and the driver of the Canadian economy, as well as our construction sector. Conversations that I've had with workers in this government's attempt to pick their pockets, hence why we dubbed this bill, really, the pick-your-pockets bill – I think that would be a more accurate title for it, quite frankly. Workers that work overtime do that knowing that they're going to get it, whether it's time and a half or double time. To put this under the guise of: it's an agreement between a worker and an employer, I can tell you that I know, obviously, there are some incredible employers throughout this province, incredible companies with incredible reputations, who treat their workers very, very well. Unfortunately, like in all sectors, there are some bad apples. There are some companies that will take advantage of this provision and either tell a future potential employee, "Sign this contract with straight time, or we'll find someone else who will," or negotiate – and I'll use that in loose brackets; really, it's more people being volun-told – how they're paid or how their banked overtime is going to be paid back to them.

This is a significant issue. I know that some of my colleagues have pointed out numbers around \$2,500 a month, and the Leader of the Official Opposition went in depth, did a breakdown of where we came up with the number on average of \$2,500. It's not precise but more of a ballpark. The point is that this legislation will allow employers to not have to pay out banked overtime at time and a half. I view that as an attack on working people.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, from the doors that I've knocked on and the constituents that I've talked to and Albertans around the province that this is something that this government is trying to bring in, is something that, they said, they sure as heck didn't advertise during the campaign. For a government that says in one breath, "Oh, yes, we're doing everything we said that we were going to and we told Albertans" yet tried to accuse us during elections of not being forthright or forthcoming with Albertans, well here's a prime example of a piece of legislation in week two of this brand new 30th Legislature. This government is going right after the very people who built this province and who keep this province moving and the economy running. So I have serious issues with their proposals when it comes to overtime.

The other thing that's interesting: I know the minister recently got up to speak about trying to clarify the holiday pay. I mean, this is another attack on working people. I know that some of my colleagues have given many examples of folks working at Christmas or other holidays that now have to go back to a

qualification period. What's interesting about this is that Alberta is the only province in the country that once again will not have this holiday pay. You know, it's interesting for the minister to say: well, this was the way it was a couple of years ago, so why can't we go back to it? Well, I guess that once upon a time minimum wage was, you know, \$2. Why can't we go back to that? The fact is that, again, recognizing – and I do recognize that this is an additional cost to, especially, small businesses. I recognize that a hundred per cent, but again, workers that are working on holidays deserve to get that pay and shouldn't have to qualify to get it.

For me, really, one of the things we tried to do when we were in government is that we would always do crossjurisdictional scans, looking at: what is the common practice in other provinces across this country? I mean, we have a very diverse country. We have great examples across the country. If I recall, especially around the cabinet table we would look at at least three or four other provinces. We'd look at Ontario usually all the time, one of the largest provinces. We'd also compare to B.C. and Saskatchewan, being our close neighbours, and then either Manitoba, Quebec, or the Maritimes to look at what the rest of the country is doing as a benchmark. Are we ahead of the pack, are we trailblazers, or are we laggards?

[The Speaker in the chair]

Quite frankly, you know, Mr. Speaker, there are some areas where we are leading the pack and trailblazers and very proud of it and then other areas where we are laggards. I can tell you that one of the reasons that our government raised the minimum wage is because Alberta was a laggard in minimum wage even though we had some of the higher costs of living and higher rates of inflation than other provinces. Because of us being so reliant on commodities and being an energy province, we are more susceptible to the booms and busts, more so than many other provinces. That also gets into why we focused on working with job creators to help diversify the economy, providing them with the right tools to be able to grow and expand.

7:00 p.m.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think, for us, looking across the country: that once again Alberta will be the only province that doesn't compensate for holiday pay or provides the caveats around qualifying for it – it's not automatic for workers – is not something that we should be proud of. We were proud when we fixed this and amended it in our term, and quite frankly it's shameful that the government is proud to bring the province back into the Dark Ages when it comes to this.

A couple of other issues, briefly, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to card check and union certification, I know that this government has a disdain for labour, organized labour, and I can say this because in many debates in this House there were members who are current members today who were members of the former party, Wildrose, who spoke at length demonizing unions and attacking their very purpose – right? – which is to bargain and be one voice, collectively supporting workers. Anyway, we don't need to go into what they are. Maybe we do, actually.

But the issue of card check: I mean, essentially, in Alberta it was a two-step process if a work site wanted to unionize. We know of examples where there have been, when work sites wanted to unionize, employers trying to break that, where there have been intimidation and threats. I can tell you that I've been on the front line with workers at different job sites trying to unionize.

Again, this isn't all companies. There are some that are incredible, that have incredible relationships with their workers, employer and employees. We applaud those companies. I think of, actually, the casinos that have a brilliant relationship with their

employees. The one casino, the brand new one in West Edmonton Mall: I'm trying to think of the name of the company. Regardless, I applaud them. They have an incredible relationship with their workers, value them, pay them a very good wage, and they are very, very loyal and very hard working.

Anyway, the card check. I mean, it's not like it was a 50 per cent plus 1 and suddenly everyone would be unionized. The bar, the threshold, was set fairly high, at 65 per cent. So what this did is just ensured that employers couldn't interfere in this process if that was the will of the majority of workers.

Ms Hoffman: Significant majority.

Mr. Bilous: Yeah. Sixty-five per cent is a significant majority, I mean, especially when you think of – even in this place, when members receive 65 per cent of the popular vote, that is a significant portion. We set the bar fairly high because we wanted this to be able to hold up to scrutiny.

But, again, you know, it's an unfortunate provision in this pick-your-pockets bill, which we've been discussing now for, I think, well over 22 hours. Yeah. Time flies when you're having fun, Mr. Speaker.

It's not part of this bill, but we know it's coming, and I just want to touch on it briefly: my frustration with having a two-tiered minimum wage. I strongly believe that equal work deserves equal pay. I don't care how old you are, the colour of your skin, who you pray to, who you love. You should get equal pay for equal work, and to say that we're going to try to help youth by paying them less is demeaning to young people. It's saying: you're not as valuable as others. You know, this isn't an internship, although I know the minister loves to compare them: it's going to give them some experience. Well, you know what? If that young person is doing the same thing that a 40-year-old or a 60-year-old or an 80-year-old is doing, it is ageism. It is discriminating against a person for their age, justifying it by paying them less, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's shameful. We will be talking about that.

I love to talk about, again, the fact that for a while in this province we had a two-tiered wage for people in the liquor industry. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in my 20s I worked in restaurants and bars. That helped put me through university. You know what? For people to say, "Oh, they get so much in tips; they don't need it": frankly, when I hear comments like that, they're usually from people that are quite ignorant, who have never worked in the industry, in the sense that if they had, in every restaurant or establishment I've worked in, the employee has to, at the end of their shift, pay out a percentage to the house, to the cooks, to the managers, to a number of people. If a person gets stiffed – that lingo means, you know, that they have customers that come in, they pay for their meal, but they don't tip or they tip a very, very low amount. What can happen – and it's happened to me, and it's happened to colleagues of mine: they end up having to pay out of their pocket to work that shift because they owe the restaurant money. This practice happens.

I know that people may jump up and say: yeah; well, you could take them to the labour board or whatever. You know what? First of all, good luck in that, and if you try, you will be out of a job. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I worked in a couple of different bars where the employers refused to pay a wage after 2 a.m. Now, do you think that the staff went home at 2:01? We went home around 5:01 in the morning after cleaning for hours and hours, yet the employer refused to pay. Is that illegal? Yes, it is. The second that a person would take them in front of the labour board or file a complaint, they were out of a job. Again, that is not all practices. I've worked for some incredible owners that have done an amazing job taking care of their workers, treating them very, very well.

Again, this is to talk about: what we need to try to do is provide and ensure that there are provisions to protect workers so that – it may be few – bad apples don't have the ability to take advantage of working people. That's why I encourage all members to vote in favour of this hoist.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on 29(2)(a) are there any wishing to ask a brief question or comment of the member?

Seeing none, on the hoist amendment, are there any wishing to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the hoist amendment to Bill 2, the bill that we have given the name the picking-your-pockets bill. Our hoist amendment reads: that the bill "be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence." The reason that I support this hoist amendment is because I think that we very seriously need to spend more time discussing the contents of this bill and consulting with Albertans about this piece, making sure that Albertans have a chance to fully understand what the government is proposing and to register their thoughts and opinions.

Let me start by saying thank you to all of the members who've contributed to this debate, either in full on comments on the bill or on amendments or in questions and comments under 29(2)(a). We've had a lot of really good discussion throughout the day, the night, and then the day again, and I really appreciate it. We're now at this point where it is Wednesday within this Chamber but Leg. Friday outside of the Chamber, as Thursday is often referred to. I'm very pleased that we were able to have such good discussion throughout, and I know that when this piece of legislation moves into Committee of the Whole, we will have the opportunity to continue the dialogue and at length discuss the pros and cons of this piece of legislation.

7:10 p.m.

As I discuss this hoist, my intention, Mr. Speaker, is to talk once more about the concerns and the reasons why I think we need to go back and consult with Albertans about this piece as well as to address some of the issues that have been raised by my hon. colleagues in this Chamber throughout the debate and to touch on that.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I really just want to get back to the key impacts of this legislation on both employers and employees, because the workers of this province drive our economy and are critically important. Without the workers, nothing gets done. Without employers, no one has jobs. It's a really important relationship, that needs to be protected. I do want to make sure that everyone is really thinking about both sides of that coin because the employers will often have very active and powerful lobbying groups, and sometimes the workers do not have that same level of visibility. Making sure we are thinking about the people who rely on minimum standards, which are in our employment standards legislation, which is what we are talking about here, is critically important; also, making sure that we're listening to the stakeholders when they are giving us feedback.

First off, when we're talking about some of the changes in Bill 2 and related to Bill 2, one of the things I've heard the members opposite say is that this bill does not introduce any new red tape. I would like to dispute that fact because we know through consultations at a number of points that employers have said that holiday pay calculations in Alberta historically have been overly burdensome and complicated. That was one of the reasons why we simplified them.

We have also heard that having wage differentials has been overly complicating. We heard that in 1998, under the leadership of Premier Ralph Klein. When they removed the student minimum wage in their changes in 1998, when they were debating increasing the minimum wage at that time, if I recall correctly, the minimum wage had not been increased in roughly five years. Interestingly, at that point the business lobby argued against raising the minimum wage – the minimum wage at that time was roughly \$5 – because of the negative impacts that it would have.

When employers are telling us that there is red tape, that having two different wages and the associated administrative overhead to track that can be difficult, when we know from looking at our neighbours in Ontario that this is, in fact, the case with their system – and the report that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar referenced and, I know, others have talked about: when Ontario did a very thorough review of employment standards, the recommendation out of that changing workplaces review was the elimination of multiple minimum wages. That report recognized that devaluing youth not only introduced unintended consequences and behaviours similar to what we've seen in Australia, the learn and churn effect – it's interesting because this government is looking to target and improve a very specific number, the youth unemployment percentage, and that number is measured.

The most specifically we can get to it is through some of the Stats Canada data, but it's grouped either, depending on which type of report you're looking at, as 15- through 24-year-olds or 15- to 19-year-olds. In both of those cases, the number you're trying to target – everyone may be impacted by this policy, but not everyone will be impacted positively by this policy because we know, from Australia and Ontario, that those 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds: perhaps if they find themselves finding more employment under this policy, the 18-, 19-, 20-, 21-, 22-, 23-year-olds, and 24-year-olds may not, because that is what we've seen in other jurisdictions that have a wage differential. Employers may preferentially hire students where they can pay that lower wage.

Again I would like to highlight that the Alberta differential will be 15 per cent, which is more than twice the differential in Ontario, which is only 85 cents. Here it will be \$2. That is not insignificant when we think about unintended consequences and how it might impact behaviour. We now have a policy where, if it positively impacts those that this policy targets, it very likely negatively impacts those just slightly older. I think that's a really important factor that we need to consider.

Within this bill, from listening to employers, we also know that employers said that the holiday pay calculations previously were overly complicated. The hon. minister just a little while ago said that payroll systems can be put back in. I think we need to acknowledge that the holiday pay calculation system was overly complicated and that not every employer has a full payroll system. There are a lot of smaller businesses that may not be able to afford the full-package HR system that calculates it, the HR system that – I will remind you that I talked about it earlier – can be set up to make sure that workers get the least possible amount of holiday pay. I know people who worked at call centres where their payroll systems were set up to make sure that their workers were never scheduled on five of the last nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the employers who do not have the very in-depth HR systems that automatically calculate these things find themselves having to do a lot of paperwork to figure out if Jane worked five of the last nine weeks preceding the work week when you have scheduled employees. If somebody is Monday to Friday, it's a little bit easier. That's not always the case in our workplaces. The idea that this is not red tape is ignoring what

employers told us in '98, told us through the review that our government did just two years ago, and what we see in Ontario. I think that's very important to remember.

I do want to speak, very briefly, again, as a reminder that these employment standards protect our most vulnerable workers. The minimum standard is the one that workers who do not have collective bargaining, workers who are potentially starting out in their careers – a lot of professional jobs and a lot of employers provide far beyond the minimum standard. I would say that above the minimum standard is the norm in Alberta. We are a prosperous province with wonderful businesses throughout, but when the minimum standard is what an employee is forced to rely upon, that's where employment standards come in.

Now workers may not get compensation for statutory holidays. We know that happens because it used to happen under the previous system, and this brings me to what my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has already touched on, the idea that because we had it before, it must have been a good thing and no big deal to bring it back. I think that's a fallacy. Because Alberta was the lowest in the country for our standards doesn't mean we should go back. We now have mainstream employment standards that put us on par – not above, not better but on par – and getting there, on par, was a big change in Alberta. I can tell you that. To start reverting to some of those standards is a disservice to the workers of this province, the workers who spend the money that they earn here in our province.

We know that when you pay the lowest paid workers a little bit more, that money does not go to Tahiti. It does not go into stocks. That gets spent in the local economy. That gets spent on buying Christmas presents and holidays. That gets spent on buying food for school lunches. Oftentimes when we're talking about employment standards and those who rely on those minimum standards, we are talking about some of our lowest paid workers, and money going to those lowest paid workers in the form of stat holiday pay gets spent in our local economies. We can see that through Stats Canada, and I'm very sad that I don't have that chart with me. But the return on investment of giving more money to the lowest paid workers is so much better than giving money to the highest paid workers. That is something we know, and I don't think anyone disputes that.

7:20 p.m.

Now, the hon. minister also spoke about the impact of the minimum wage on our economy. He accuses us of suggesting that the minimum wage has no impact. We have never said that. What I would suggest to everyone: if you are interested in seeing some of the impacts on our economy, there are ways you can look at what has actually happened in Alberta. We can look at the Labour Force Survey, we can look at the stats, and then we can compare to the next-closest jurisdiction and see what the differences may be. That can help pinpoint: when we changed the minimum wage and Saskatchewan did not, how did that potentially impact it?

Now, economies are complicated. Economists do not always agree with each other. Ask two economists for their opinions, and you will get three opinions: that has been said before. That being said, we can look at Alberta and we can start trying to interpret the numbers. The minimum wage here has gone up, and our youth unemployment has been going down since its peak in roughly July 2016. We're seeing those improvements. We're also seeing that our youth unemployment trends very closely matched what was happening with Saskatchewan around the same time, leading me to posit that it was more to do with the global collapse in the price of oil and the overall recession than any specific impacts from a minimum wage increase given the fact that Saskatchewan even now

has higher youth unemployment than Alberta does but did not make changes to their minimum wage.

This policy of having a youth job-creating wage: I have not heard the members opposite provide any proof of how this will create new jobs or any studies showing that it has created new jobs in other jurisdictions. In fact, Ontario, where we are modelling this after, although not completely, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar pointed out, has youth unemployment higher than the national average. This solution has not solved the problem in Ontario, yet we are bringing it to Alberta, where it will introduce other problems, other problems like I've talked about. Let's touch on a few more: the fact that many youth are working to support themselves and their families. We know that the Premier has told the story many times of the youth he met at a gas station in Hardisty who was working to support his family. That youth would get \$2 less an hour under this government's policies, and I fail to see how that will help that youth and his family.

With all this being said, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 2 and share my thoughts with the Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment. I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration rising.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for her comments. I would like to just make a couple of comments in regard to talking about, first of all, the youth minimum wage and the red tape associated with it. I agree with the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods that if you asked an economist for a point of view, you can get three, all from the same economist. There is some debate in terms of the impact.

However, as we look at the general trend and most of the economists who are looking at this type of issue in terms of the impact of the minimum wage, it often has to do with the scope and size of the change and what the conditions are around it. I agree that these items are complex. As has been indicated before, the change in the minimum wage made by the previous government was significant, nearly 50 per cent, and in the context of one of the worst recessions we've had in the Alberta economy.

Quite frankly, there is an impact. We've seen from studies and we're told that there was an actual impact on the minimum wage associated with that. The member opposite also indicated the \$2 differential. I also heard some concerns raised earlier by other members saying that this change in the minimum wage will actually result in a \$2 decrease for people currently working. I just want to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that the minimum is just that, a minimum. Employers can choose to pay workers more. In fact, many do. In fact, a number of employers have indicated that they will continue to pay \$15 an hour, and this makes sense. When you actually hire an employee and you train them and they become more productive, you want to hold on to them. It costs money to hire. It costs money to train.

That's why we are focused on getting our youth to work – right? – by reducing the minimum wage so that we can get them on this job ladder. The job ladder: once they get into the workforce, they can actually gain some experience in the marketplace. Then they perhaps either stay with that employer, or they have the option to move elsewhere, and they can actually, with that experience, continue to increase their earnings. This is not about a cut to those individuals who are helping their families. This is not about a cut for those currently working. This is about creating more opportunities for youth who don't have opportunities, and we have

a very large number, thousands and thousands of Albertan youth who need to get their jobs back.

The last comment I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, is in regard to red tape. The hon. member, you know, indicated that she held consultations with employers and that with holiday pay some of the calculations were burdensome. I understand that. Some changes were made to address that from the eligibility standpoint. Also, my understanding is that some changes were made in terms of how the payment was actually done. We're not suggesting any changes to the pay, but what we are suggesting is going back to the previous general holiday.

Again, a minimum is just that, a minimum. If an employer finds it too complicated with their systems to do that, then they don't have to do that. But, in fact, what we heard from a number of employers, particularly in the restaurant industry, is that the general holiday pay on a nonstandard workday where the restaurant was closed resulted in thousands of dollars in additional costs. What did they do about this? They told us what they did. They laid off staff, or they reduced hours, and the people who were most negatively affected were our youth. That's why we're making this change to the general holiday. But, again, a minimum is just that, a minimum. Employers aren't required to do that.

The last comment I'd like to make in terms of talking about red tape: the hon. member mentioned that in 1998 under Ralph Klein they actually eliminated the youth employment wage and that part of the reason was the complication. Well, I would suggest to the hon. member that HR systems have become far more sophisticated since that point in time and far easier. Again, quite frankly, I would reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that when we actually talked to employers in Ontario, they have systems in place. Their HR systems can manage this and manage this fairly seamlessly without significant cost. We have the ability to do the same.

We're talking about red tape, and we're talking about these changes, and what this is really about is getting Albertans back to work and getting our youth back to work. This is why we're focused on making these changes, because we firmly believe – and this is why Bill 2, our open for business act, and these particular areas we're focused on are getting Albertans back to work. Even if it creates just a little bit of red tape, we think our Alberta youth are worth it.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, I would never ever, ever want to presuppose a decision of the Assembly, but my Speaker senses are at peak Speaker senses, and I have the sense that we might be getting closer to the end of what I think we can all agree has been the longest day of our lives given that, technically speaking, it's still yesterday. I hope that hon. members would just join me in thanking the table officers as well as our pages and, in particular, the LASS security staff and the hardest working man in politics at the *Hansard* controls today, Roger. Thank you so much to everyone for all your help.

I see the hon. Government House Leader is rising to move a motion.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually going to rise on two unanimous consent motions. Like you, I sense something though I don't know what Speaker senses are. Maybe you have to be elected Speaker before you get those. But I do sense that the opposition is near to wanting to test the House to see if their 24 hours now of hard work has changed anybody's mind. For one, my mind has not been changed. In fact, my resolve to support Bill 2 is even stronger now after 24 hours. But I don't want to prejudice

the rest of the Chamber nor delay the opposition in that opportunity to be able to see the results of their hard work here shortly.

First, I will move for unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells for the amendment that is before the House and for second reading of Bill 2.

The Speaker: Having heard the motion, it is a request for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the hoist motion, and then, immediately following, the question on second reading will be put to the Assembly, depending on the results of the first motion.

[Unanimous consent granted]

7:30 p.m.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One other motion. As members of this House are no doubt aware, most members of Executive Council have a meeting on Monday, June 10, with First Nation chiefs, which presents a conflict with Oral Question Period at 1:50 p.m. on that day. Therefore, to give the opportunity for private members of this Assembly to decide whether they want better access to the Premier and cabinet for question period or not, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Orders 3(1), 7(1), 7(1.1) to allow the Assembly to meet on Monday, June 10, from 11 a.m. to noon in addition to normal sitting hours and, furthermore, to commence the ordinary daily Routine business at 11 a.m. on that Monday morning with Oral Question Period to commence at 11 a.m. and to suspend Standing Order 7(1.1) in order to begin Monday's sitting at 11 a.m. with a 50-minute Oral Question Period.

The Speaker: Hon. members, for clarity's sake, this is not a motion; this is a request for unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: We are on the hoist motion. That is HA. Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion? Seeing none.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment HA lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:32 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Loyola
Dach	Gray	Nielsen
Deol	Hoffman	Schmidt
Eggen	Irwin	Shepherd
Feehan		

Against the motion:

Aheer	LaGrange	Rowswell
Allard	Loewen	Savage
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Long	Sawhney
Copping	Lovely	Schow
Dreeshen	Luan	Schulz
Ellis	Madu	Schweitzer
Glasgo	Milliken	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glubish	Nally	Singh
Goodridge	Neudorf	Smith
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Horner	Orr	Turton
Issik	Pitt	van Dijken

Jones	Reid	Wilson
Kenney	Rosin	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 13	Against – 48

[Motion on amendment HA lost]

The Speaker: Being a hoist motion, the question for second reading must immediately be put.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading of Bill 2 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:38 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Rowswell
Allard	Long	Savage
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Sawhney
Copping	Luan	Schow
Dreeshen	Madu	Schulz
Ellis	Milliken	Schweitzer
Glasgo	Nally	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glubish	Neudorf	Singh
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Smith
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Turton
Issik	Rehn	van Dijken

Jones	Reid	Wilson
Kenney	Rosin	Yaseen
LaGrange		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Loyola
Dach	Gray	Nielsen
Deol	Hoffman	Schmidt
Eggen	Irwin	Shepherd
Feehan		

Totals:	For – 49	Against – 13
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[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

The Speaker: I see the hon. Government House Leader rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-four hours after that conversation started, we got progress. I'm always happy to see progress. It doesn't matter how we get it as long as we get it.

First of all, I'd just like to thank all the House for their hard work over the last 24 hours and, as you said, Mr. Speaker, through you to all of the LAO staff who have been along with us for the last 24 hours. I wish all members a great weekend.

As such, I will move to adjourn the House until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Prior to the motion, as I speculate we will have a positive result, please, members, I implore you to travel home safely. I would recommend that you stay the night. Your family wants you to arrive, so please govern yourselves accordingly.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 7:43 p.m. on Thursday]

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