



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 11, 2019

Day 11

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

First Session

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)
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Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 11, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us today in the Speaker's gallery is a long-serving Member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly and former Speaker of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Dan D'Autremont. I invite you to welcome him to the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Also joining us, basically, is everyone else, which is amazing. Joining us from the constituency of Red Deer-South is Eastview middle school. I invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Health Care Services for Wildfire Evacuees

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give thanks to the many men and women of Alberta Health Services who have been absolutely essential in evacuating patients, continuing care for residents, and caring for essential services in evacuated areas. Front-line paramedics and emergency medical services have worked with hospital staff and physicians to provide seamless care in stressful, chaotic, and daunting circumstances. Through it all they've done their best to show every patient and family the respect and compassion we expect from our health care professionals every day.

While mandatory evacuation orders in High Level, the surrounding areas of Mackenzie county, areas within the county of Northern Lights, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe, Meander, and Chateh were lifted, several fires continue to burn out of control in northern Alberta while Paddle Prairie is still evacuated. Yet, Mr. Speaker, our health care providers remain determined as more Albertans require assistance and evacuation service and treatment every day.

In addition to evacuating health facilities, AHS is adding supports for people dealing with the stress of returning home, including a new, seven-days-a-week mental health service in High Level. I know, Mr. Speaker, that I speak for all members of this Chamber when I say thanks to our physicians and AHS staff caring for patients affected by these fires. They have our deepest respect and gratitude. They continue to uphold the values of our health care system every day as these forest fires continue to rage on.

Mr. Speaker, the AHS paramedics, nurses, physicians, and others alongside these brave firefighters are the real heroes of Alberta today. Their work saves lives as they continue to work as long as needed to protect us and property. As residents return home to High Level, I am reminded of why I'm so thankful to be an Albertan. The most essential Alberta advantage that we have is the dedication of the people, including our firefighters and health care professionals, serving us today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is rising to make a statement.

Provincial Fiscal Position

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They were dishonest with Albertans, and they fudged the numbers: these are the Premier's words on Alberta's finances. The disturbing and baseless allegation the Premier is making is not only the type of cynical mudslinging he pretends to despise; it is also simply not true. The budgets, financial records, and reports released under our government were prepared by professional and competent public servants. The numbers were audited by the former Auditor General of Alberta, a public servant this government chose to fire without cause.

Mr. Speaker, these are numbers based in fact and evidence, not numbers invented by politicians, but of course facts and evidence are not what this Premier trades in. The Premier has chosen to ignore the truth and alleges that public servants misled Albertans about our finances. This is a cheap, offensive attack on the integrity and professionalism of the same officials that work in the Premier's own government. As a former Minister of Finance I am disturbed and disappointed to hear these comments, but of course the Premier has not done this by mistake. This carefully crafted spin is to prepare Albertans for what is to come.

What is next according to the Premier? What he calls a shared sacrifice. Of course, Albertans can read between the lines. This means cruel cuts and austerity policies that everyday Albertans will be hurt by. The Premier has said that Alberta's finances are worse than he thought to convince Albertans that the only solution is massive cuts to our health care, education, and the services Albertans depend on. He is telling Albertans that good schools for our children, health care for our seniors, and supports for our families are all a luxury, one that he will not protect. He is preparing Albertans for his austerity panel's recommendations, which are a foregone conclusion: cut, cut, cut.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve the truth, not cynical spin that will be used against them to gut their services, communities, and province.

The Speaker: The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Energy Industries in Drayton Valley-Devon

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Drayton Valley-Devon have for too long been burdened by ill-advised government policy, ill-advised policies which have caused local companies to go from 100 employees to 50 to bankrupt, all in the span of a few short years, all because of the devastating NDP policies which drove investment away from Drayton Valley-Devon and into the United States although, as the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo previously pointed out, some investment has been driven from Alberta to Iraq and other jurisdictions which don't believe in environmental stewardship and do not care about even the bare minimum in human rights standards.

It wasn't just new investment we lost. Our equipment, our people, and much of our prosperity were shipped to other jurisdictions to produce energy there. These other jurisdictions are using our equipment to increase the production of oil and gas in their countries. With this new production, derived from our equipment, come new greenhouse emissions, and with our equipment, we exported our greenhouse gas emissions.

All of that exporting, not of our oil but of our quality of life, drove unemployment in my riding to 10.6 per cent in 2016, and of the constituents who hadn't lost their jobs, most of them took a pay cut

or a cut in hours in some cases. Others gave up looking for work altogether. And it wasn't just oil and gas workers who suffered; it was youth and service workers and their families. Everyone suffered.

We cannot repeal the suffering. We have and will continue to repeal, though, the NDP policies, like the job-killing carbon tax. The spring of renewal has started, and it's to lead to a summer of promises kept. If we must, we will sit through the night to keep our promises because my constituents in Drayton Valley-Devon sent me here to keep our electoral promises.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is rising to make a statement.

Postsecondary Convocation 2019

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, the month of June is a very special time for Alberta postsecondary students and their families as we celebrate convocation. Watching students cross the stage to accept their degrees and diplomas is a wonderful opportunity to stop and reflect on the incredible future for our province. These students are future business leaders, community activists, and some of them may even sit here in this House one day, elected to serve Albertans.

Unfortunately, these students are graduating at a moment of great uncertainty. Where are the jobs for new nurses and teachers? Will this government's commitment to the failed fiscal experiment of huge corporate tax giveaways mean that students will have to head out of the province, perhaps, to find their own economic prosperity? About a generation ago Albertans had to ask themselves these same questions when the government of the day made cuts that took a whole generation for this province to recover from. I, for one, am concerned that we are seeing the clock being turned back.

I hope these students will bring into the world the values that will make this province great. I hope that they lead the charge to keep on building an economy, a diverse economy, on a strong foundation of environmental stewardship, that they will help those in need, and that they will work hard to build a prosperous Alberta, where each and every Albertan is included.

On behalf of our caucus I would like to offer our congratulations to Alberta's class of 2019.

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-East.

1:40 Canadians' Rights and the Role of Government

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was elected to represent Lethbridge-East based, at least in part, on my experience. I am a first-generation Canadian. I spoke German at home until I went to school, and I worked summers on the farm to pay for my schooling. My wife and I have five children, four daughters and one son.

My life experience makes me a passionate defender of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for my children's future, particularly 6(2), that

every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of a permanent resident of Canada has the right . . .

(b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province, and section 7, that

everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person.

This pursuit is deeply ingrained in Canadians, and they strive to achieve these goals through a free-market economy, which is one of voluntary exchange under the laws of supply and demand, that provide the sole basis for our economic system without government intervention.

This limited government is an important component of economic freedom, and higher levels of economic freedom are associated

with higher annual incomes, better health, longer life expectancies, and greater political and civil liberties. Milton Friedman said:

Government has three primary functions. It should provide for military defense of the nation. It should enforce contracts between individuals. It should protect citizens from crimes against themselves or their property. When government – in pursuit of good intentions tries to rearrange the economy, legislate morality, or help special interests, the cost come in inefficiency, lack of motivation, and loss of freedom.

Government should be a referee, not an active player.

Private industry in a free economy, governed by a limited Legislature with clear, unencumbering laws, is the best and only true path for all citizens to find success through hard work and a level playing field. Then with the fair and responsible collection of taxes from private individuals and corporations, handled as stewards of other people's money, it can judiciously be spent to maintain the public services we desire and need. The very best scenario for a strong public sector is a free and vibrant private economy.

The Speaker: I might just remind all hon. members that there's a long-standing tradition inside the Legislature here in Alberta that members' statements are free from interruption or heckling.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is rising.

Climate Change

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is on record as saying that he doesn't believe the world is in a climate crisis. However, a report released recently by the National Centre for Climate Restoration in Australia not only states clearly that we are in a crisis but outlines in horrifying detail the consequences of not taking action now to deal with it.

By 2050, if we continue to do nothing, global sea levels will rise by half a metre, wiping out the agriculturally important river deltas such as the Mekong, Ganges, and Nile. Some of the world's most populous cities, including Chennai, Mumbai, Jakarta, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Ho Chi Minh City, Shanghai, Lagos, Bangkok, and Manila, will be abandoned. Some small islands will become uninhabitable. Ten per cent of Bangladesh will be destroyed, displacing 15 million people alone.

More than 30 per cent of the world's land surface will be turned to desert, with the most severely affected areas being southern Africa, the southern Mediterranean, west Asia, the Middle East, inland Australia, and the southwestern United States.

Agriculture production will decline sharply, food prices will rise sharply, and more than a billion people will have to leave their homes because they've become uninhabitable. In the words of the report, "The scale of destruction is beyond our capacity to model, with a high likelihood of human civilisation coming to an end."

But all is not lost. We still have time to act, but we must move quickly. The report calls for

a massive global mobilisation of resources . . . in the coming decade to build a zero-emissions industrial system and set in train the restoration of a safe climate. This would be akin in scale to the World War II emergency mobilisation.

Mr. Speaker, the UCP needs to get off its hands and enact a real plan to tackle the climate crisis now. Albertans' lives and those all over the world depend on it.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a tabling or four.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for indulging me. I have a number of tablings on the issue of climate change. I have a couple of e-mails from constituents that I received. One was from Kelly Granigan. She agrees that we need “large-scale, systematic change” to accomplish meaningful action on climate change.

Another one is from Caitlin Richards. She’s a parent of a one-year-old daughter and is increasingly concerned about the climate crisis. She says, “We are running out of time and cannot afford to lose what progress we have already made on developing new strategies, in addition to tree-planting programs and the Alberta carbon levy.”

Also on the topic of climate change, Mr. Speaker, I have an excerpt from Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical, specifically section 26. It says: “There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced.”

The Speaker: Hon. member, we appreciate the member’s statement that you just made. I hope that you will table your documents in a much more expedient fashion.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I’m sure the Pope would like to know that you’ve cut him off. “Investments have also been made in . . . production and transportation which consume less energy.”

Finally, Mr. Speaker, of course, I have a number of tweets from online personality and radio commentator Charles Adler in response to a video that he saw on YouTube wherein the Member for Calgary-Lougheed brags about denying AIDS patients the right to see their dying spouses, and specifically . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Thank you, hon. member. You are finished your tabling, sir. You are finished your tabling, sir. Have a seat.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No. Have a seat. When the Speaker is on his feet, you are not on your feet. Am I making myself clear, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar?

Mr. Schmidt: Crystal.

The Speaker: Excellent work.

Are there any other tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. I have the five copies required. This is from the Canadian Press. ‘Can’t Be Any More Clear’: Scientist Says Fires in Alberta Linked to Climate Change.

The Speaker: Are there others?

I have a tabling. I have six copies of the Child and Youth Advocate report titled Mandatory Reviews into Child Deaths for the period of April 1, 2018, to September 30, 2018, received in my office yesterday, June 10, 2019.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Schweitzer, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, pursuant to the Statutes Repeal Act an undated report entitled Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Statutes Repeal Act, 2019 List.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Labour and Social Legislation

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government’s election promises are not worth the paper they’re written on. Take this government’s attack on banked overtime. On April 2, 2019, the now Premier stated to the *Edmonton Journal*: “This does not affect overtime pay. I repeat – it does not affect or diminish overtime pay.” But we know that the average oil and gas worker stands to lose up to \$320 a week. To the Premier. Promise made, promise broken: why?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader is rising to answer.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition continues to mischaracterize the situation around overtime. To be very, very clear, as we have been many times in the past, workers have options to enter into overtime agreements that have been in place for a long time inside this province. It was only changed just about a year or a year and a half ago or so under the NDP government. Workers would have that option. Nothing would be forced on workers. It would be a partnership between workers and their employers, something that we heard from many employees that they would like to see. I heard from several constituents on that issue, and the opposition should stop with that fear and smear.

Ms Notley: The new rules allow employers to impose those arrangements on the workers, and the members opposite know it.

Now, two weeks ago the Premier stood in this House and also made the same claim, but the information was not correct. We have been very, very careful to lay out exactly why the information is not correct. Still, the Premier said it here in the House, information which is not correct, just like the House leader, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier and the House leader: will you stop saying not correct things in this House, and admit that the Premier broke the promise that he made to Albertans on April 2 of this year with respect to overtime?

1:50

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let’s be very, very clear. I know that the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to continue to say incorrect things in this Assembly. It is optional. It’s up to workers. They would have to enter into agreements with their employers. It’s taken place inside this province for decades. Nothing has changed from how it was a couple of years ago. Again, it would be up to employees.

What is shocking to me, though, Mr. Speaker, is to watch in this House, both in question period and during bill debate, the opposition, over and over and over, attack employers and job creators in this province, basically implying that they would force something on their employees and treat their employees in terrible ways. That’s ridiculous. They should stop attacking the people that create employment in our province.

Ms Notley: You know, the thing about legislation, Mr. Speaker, is that it’s in black and white, and even the UCP can’t run away from that.

Now, there’s more, Mr. Speaker. Albertans were shocked last November when audio emerged of the Premier praising those fighting against the rights of gay couples to adopt children. The

Premier stated repeatedly that he would not legislate on social issues, except fast-forward to no less than three weeks into his first session, and he's introduced a bill to – wait for it – legislate on social issues by rolling back guaranteed protections for LGBTQ kids. To the Premier. Promise made, promise broken. How many more promises do you plan to break?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and her caucus can't help themselves. They focus on fear and smear. You'd think they would learn. On April 16 they were fired by the people of Alberta exactly because of those tactics.

Let me also be very clear, as we have been in this House many times, that Alberta will still be the province with the best GSA protection in the entire country. That's important to our caucus. That's important to our government and to our party. That's what we will be focused on. This party across from me, the opposition, should stop with the fear and smear. They should stop making things up and stick with the facts. Alberta will continue to have strong GSA protection in place.

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

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Ms Notley: Last week the Education minister held a press conference that can only be described charitably as a train wreck. She told the media that her Education Act restores balance to how different groups are treated in their schools. To the minister: can she please inform the House how an act that guaranteed timely and fulsome protection of vulnerable LGBTQ kids at schools in any way detracted from the experience of other kids who were not involved in GSAs?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, to be very clear, the opposition continues to make things up, continues with their fear and their smear. Alberta will have the best protection for GSAs, something that was voted in with Bill 10, that was supported by the legacy parties that make up the United Conservative Party and was supported by the NDP Party at the same time. That's what the facts are. So the opposition should stop playing with that.

Now, what will change is the attack that continued from the former government on all sorts of groups within our education system. We'll be focused on working with parents, focused on working with teachers to educate our kids in the best possible way.

Ms Notley: The Education minister's comments got even more out of touch. She said, quote: I care about every single student regardless of the label that they have; I care about every single student, whether they are – whatever. The word is not "whatever," Mr. Speaker. It's "gay." We know that private schools have been fighting against even using the word "gay." To the minister, not the House leader, will she say the word "gay," and will she make it clear that school board policies on GSAs should include the word "gay" if that is what students want?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, the approach that continues to happen inside this House, which borders on bullying of the Education minister, is similar to the bullying that took place over the weekend by the deputy Leader of the NDP Party against a singer who was trying to participate in the raising of the pride flag here on the Legislature Grounds. I can tell you – it's interesting – when I was home this weekend, Albertans said to me very loud and clear that they are so sick and tired of the bullying tactics of the NDP. It is ridiculous. It's inappropriate. I call on them to stop it in this House and, certainly, to stop it outside of this House.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when the minister is allowed to speak, her ill-informed talking points are just disrespectful to all who care about GSAs. There's no timeline for principals to act. There's no policy barring schools from discouraging kids from requesting a GSA. There's no longer an enforcement mechanism. Private schools can discriminate should they choose. And, of course, there's no guaranteed protection from being outed. Why won't the minister at least come clean to the kids she is bound to serve? Why won't she just, frankly, be better at her job?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Education minister is great at her job. I'm proud of our Education minister. I'm proud to stand with her inside this House. I'm proud of the work that she's doing inside our education system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, we do not support mandatory notification. We do not support outing gay kids. It is completely ridiculous for the opposition to continue to say that. We have fought, and we will make sure that Bill 10 and the protection for GSAs will remain in our system. The NDP should stop saying false facts.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition has the call.

Ms Notley: We support gay-straight alliances; we wouldn't out our kids: now, those were the words of the current Minister of Justice during his bid to lead the UCP. Now he willingly stands by as the Premier plots to destroy to GSAs and, of course, out those who wish to start them. To the minister: if you can abandon your promises on matters that are this fundamental to basic values this quickly, what other promises can Albertans look forward to you abandoning?

Speaker's Ruling

Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

The Speaker: I might just intervene that I'm not entirely sure that the hon. Minister of Justice – I'm not sure what government policy you might be referring to him abandoning, but . . .

Ms Notley: Outing gay kids, breach of the Charter: that's the one.

The Speaker: I think that the Speaker is the one who has the call at this point in time. I rarely intervene . . . [interjection] I would prefer you to fill me in when you have the call, not when I have the call.

The Government House Leader.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

(continued)

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Justice minister has maintained his commitments, as has Alberta's new government, which is to keep Bill 10, to keep the best protection for GSAs and for kids who want to participate in GSAs. That's a promise made, a promise kept. That is what this government is going to do. Despite the fact that the opposition wants to keep making things up, we do not believe in mandatory notification. We do not believe in outing gay kids. We stand with Bill 10. We stand with having the best GSA protection in the entire country of any province. That's a fact. I thank the hon. Justice minister for supporting that.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has a wonderful opportunity now.

Ms Notley: Speaking of making things up, Mr. Speaker, the hon. House leader is breaking new records today.

Anyway, according to the Attorney General, quote: as the United Conservative Party goes forward, we have a lot of work to do to build trust with LGBTQ people. To the Attorney General: do you actually believe that the best way to build trust with people is to tell them what you think they want to hear when you're running for something and then break your promise once elected?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich for that member to talk about telling people when they run for something and then breaking their promise when they're elected when she didn't bother to mention the largest tax increase in the history of the province and then brought it in place when she came into this Assembly. Again, it's misinformation that's being presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition. The Justice minister and all of us inside the new Alberta government stand for the strongest protection of GSAs, stand for making sure kids are not bullied inside schools. We will continue to support Bill 10. That is the position that was taken by the legacy caucus of this party, and it's not going to change.

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order is noted at 1:59.

The Leader of the Official Opposition on your second supplemental.

Ms Notley: Yesterday the AG claimed that Bill 8, or, as I like to call it, Bill Hate, will usher in the strongest protections for LGBTQ kids in Canada. That is not true. Now, while it appears very possible that the Education minister doesn't actually understand her own act, the House leader clearly doesn't understand it, as an AG and as a member of the Law Society you are expected to read legislation and to explain it to the public in good faith. Will the minister commit to reading the legislation from Ontario and the policies from Nova Scotia and correct the record in this House tomorrow?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the minister and all of the United Conservative Party and the Alberta government support the strongest protection for GSAs in the entire country. The minister, when he says that, is correct. When I say that, I'm correct. The hon. Leader of the Opposition does not want to refer to that, but that's the fact. That's an important issue. It's important to this government. It's important to Albertans. We will still have the strongest protections for GSAs of any province in the country. Those are the facts. I'm disappointed that the hon. Leader of the Opposition keeps presenting facts that are not exactly truthful.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted by the Member for . . . [interjection] A point of order is noted by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

The rules around here are pretty simple. I stand up; everybody else doesn't speak. I sit back down; everybody else speaks. I hope that you'll follow the rules.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

2:00 Municipal Government Act Amendments

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's changes to the MGA aren't changes at all. In fact, the entirety of Bill 7 is basically just restating powers that municipalities already have to defer or eliminate the collection of taxes. Earlier this year the city of Lethbridge provided a seven-year cancellation of taxes for a \$4 million health development. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: won't you admit that this bill is nothing but a trumped-up communications plan to give the illusion that your government is open for business?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. The amendment that was put forward is geared towards giving flexibility to our municipalities to make sure that they attract investment and economic opportunities to all of our communities.

I want to correct the record. The section the members opposite are referring to is section 347, and in that particular section it clearly says: where "a council considers it equitable to do so." There is nothing in the MGA that is geared towards economic investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Member Ceci: They don't need flexibility; they need predictability and certainty, Mr. Speaker.

The nonlegislation brought forward by this minister has done one thing, and that's stir up confusion for municipalities. The mayor of St. Albert told her local newspaper: "I think the first phone call they should have [made] was to [call] both RMA . . . and AUMA . . . We could have given [them] feedback and helped develop the bill." My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why didn't you consult with municipalities on the legislation? Perhaps they could have told you it was a nothing bill.

Mr. Madu: Thank you again for the question. Mr. Speaker, when I took office as the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the first thing that I did in my very first week was to reach out to mayors and reeves across this province to give them a heads-up on the priorities of our ministry. And on April 16 the people of this province voted in large numbers. We clearly laid out in our platform that we would specifically pursue this amendment. It was a promise made; it is a promise kept.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo on your second supplemental.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad he reached out. Did municipalities ask for this bill? No. The one thing this bill could do is draw more attention to the ability of municipalities to defer or lower taxes, but that added exposure has also caused worry with the mayor of St. Albert. She fears that overuse of these tools could spur a "race to the bottom" as municipalities attempt to outdo each other on the incentives for developers and corporations. To the minister: you introduced a nothing bill, you didn't talk to anyone before you did it, and now you're creating fear amongst your stakeholders.

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, you see, when we put forward this particular bill, I had the mayor of Strathcona county, I had business leaders, and they were all part of that particular announcement. The one thing that the member opposite doesn't understand is that they have no understanding of what it takes to create an environment for businesses to do well. They presided over the near-decline of our economy. Our government would not let that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage the members opposite to set a better example for our youth.

Red Deer College Transition to University Status Postsecondary Graduates' Employment

Mr. Stephan: Red Deer College will become Red Deer university upon an order in council under the Post-secondary Learning Act, which authorizes the establishment of undergraduate universities.

The college is working with the ministry for the minister to initiate the order in council. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will he confirm that his ministry will support the college in its work to become a university to provide improved educational choices for Albertan families?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, we are working very carefully and closely with Red Deer College to help it transition to university status. The transition process takes several years and includes a number of steps to ensure that the degrees that are offered are meaningful and are necessary within the broader community and within the province as well. Moreover, Red Deer is one of our fastest growing communities, so this transition will help to give the residents of Red Deer more educational opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'm out of time. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government's platform states that it will focus on increased institutional and individual choices for universities and given that this government's platform also states that it will reduce provincial red tape and mandates on universities and colleges, freeing them to innovate and compete more and comply with bureaucratic mandates less, to the minister: what will this government do to apply these platform principles to support the college in its work to become a university?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Indeed, getting out of the way and reducing unnecessary bureaucratic rules and red tape is critical to helping our institutions move forward. There are onerous reporting requirements that are preventing our institutions from innovating and competing, and as we look to strengthen our postsecondary system here in Alberta, we need to make sure that they have the capacity to innovate, to conduct necessary research, to help ensure that they are fulfilling the labour market needs not just of today but also of the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under the NDP's watch net private-sector jobs shrank by tens of thousands and given that there will be thousands of new university and college graduates looking for jobs, to the minister: what will you do to help improve the employment outlook of thousands of Alberta's postsecondary graduates?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it's a top priority, making sure that our graduates have opportunities available to them once they finish their programs. In particular, we're going to be doing two very particular things. First and foremost, we'll be working and supporting a range of different organizations, including Careers: the Next Generation and Skills Canada, and expanding the registered apprenticeship program to help encourage more high school students to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. As well, we'll also be evaluating the labour market impacts of degree programs.

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

Public Service Contract Negotiations

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is just weeks old, but already they're making bold threats to public-sector workers that would make even the former PC government blush. A letter that we've obtained from the Finance minister's office threatens that if public-sector unions, including postsecondary instructors, don't agree to delay talks on wages, the government will consider "all available options up to and including legislation." To the Finance minister: is issuing an over-the-top threat to public-sector workers really the best approach to bargaining in good faith?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point in time we have requested a delay in arbitration hearings. We believe that that's in Albertans' best interests as we determine a pathway forward out of the fiscal mess that the previous government left us in. We're waiting for the MacKinnon panel to report. We believe that we deserve to give a thoughtful response on a path forward for Albertans.

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, as an English teacher, Mr. Speaker, I have to point out that there's a difference between a request and a threat.

Given that our public-sector workers include nurses who care for the sick, teachers who prepare our students for their futures, and guards who protect our Legislature, to the minister: will you apologize in this House today for this sham consultation that you claim to be running on wage talks and bullying tactics that you have turned to?

The Speaker: I know that the hon. member has spent 10 years inside this Assembly and knows that after question 4 preambles are no longer used.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we value the contribution our public service makes to delivering high-quality services to Albertans. We're committed to ensuring that we have a path forward, to continuing to deliver high-quality services to Albertans, and to being fiscally responsible. Albertans expect nothing less of this government. Therefore, we've requested a delay in arbitration so we can understand the best path forward on behalf of all parties.

2:10

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the head of this government's own blue-ribbon panel has already called for public-sector wage rollbacks and given that the minister is hanging this hammer over the heads of public-sector workers with a threat of legislation, will the minister commit today to retracting his letter, sitting down with public-sector unions, and to start bargaining in good faith?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're committed to working in good faith with all stakeholders, including our public service stakeholders and partners. We believe that a request to delay arbitration is reasonable, is responsible, and is in the best interests of Albertans so that we can deal with the fiscal mess that Albertans have been handed by the previous government, which is the members opposite.

Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts

Ms Phillips: Recently it was revealed that Alberta's Minister of Finance devoted many hours to a private school that outlawed witchcraft, the occult, and casting spells, but the minister seems to believe he can wave a wand, balance a budget while blowing a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in it, and not touch education or health care. The minister is no Dumbledore, but for those who need health care and education, he may just be Voldemort. Will the minister confirm with this House that revenue forecasts aren't magic but are prepared by professionals and private-sector forecasting firms?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, our government is committed to being responsible with hard-working Albertans' tax dollars, and we will follow through on that. We're committed to delivering high-quality services to Albertans, and we're committed to balance in our first term. As a result of that, again, we will be working judiciously to bring forward a budget in the fall and believe that we can accomplish both ends.

Ms Phillips: Given that this Finance minister appears to believe that private-sector forecasters and dedicated public servants use a Ouija board to prepare revenue forecasts, why did this minister continue his attack on the integrity of officials in Treasury Board and Finance in question period yesterday?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe in and have witnessed first-hand the very skilled capabilities of senior department officials. Again, we are working judiciously to clean up the mess that the previous government has left us. The previous government left us on a trajectory for \$100 billion of accumulated provincial debt. That kind of debt would prevent future governments from delivering high-quality services to Albertans. Our policies will reverse that trend.

Ms Phillips: Given that this minister thinks he can justify eliminating the classroom improvement fund in his upcoming minibudget, does this minister think that supports for students with disabilities or help for teachers in managing increasingly complex classrooms will come by magic this fall, or does he have some other way to replace those funds up his sleeve? Is there another freelance government announcement coming in today's question period?

Mr. Toews: Again, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to delivering high-quality services to Albertans. We made a commitment to Albertans that we would maintain education funding in spite of the fiscal challenges that we're facing. We're also implementing a series of policies that will return investment to this province and, with it, jobs and opportunities and will over time increase government revenues. We have the responsibility to clean up the mess the previous government has left us in.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge is rising with a question.

Violent Crime in Northeast Calgary

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, there has been a rash of violence within the Indo-Canadian community in northeast Calgary. In April and May there were four murders of Indo-Canadians, which police suggest could be connected and linked to organized crime. We also know that sometimes new Canadians have a tougher time accessing police services. Can the Minister of

Justice inform this House about what steps are being taken to combat this rise in organized crime in northeast Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for the advocacy on this issue. It's been thoughtful and timely. I'm looking forward to meeting later this week with some key community groups regarding this matter to make sure we can start hearing their concerns and addressing this. We're also going to be making sure that we continue to provide our law enforcement officials with the resources they need, including additional funding for ALERT to disrupt gang activity. We're going to make sure that our law enforcement officials have the resources they need to do their jobs.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau has gutted much of the tough-on-crime legislation introduced under the previous Conservative government and given that the violence we are seeing on Calgary streets is looking like the all-too-real violence in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, what steps will our government take to combat that rise in crime in our community?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice is rising.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our platform outlined a detailed plan for us to combat crime here in this province, including funding for ALERT, and part of that funding for ALERT is going to go towards combatting gang activity. We're also going to be making sure that we provide funding to drug treatment courts to deal with addictions and many of the root causes of crime here in our province. I also want to flag as well that the ALERT team had a big drug bust this last week in Grande Prairie. There were seven arrests. They seized cocaine, fentanyl, drugs, and body armour.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that children are worried about their safety in schools, hundreds of people rallied in northeast Calgary just the other weekend to protest the dangers of drugs making their way onto streets and into schools and given that our United Conservative platform promised to address issues related to organized crime and illegal drugs, can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to make the streets safer?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, unlike previous governments, we're going to be making sure that our law enforcement officials have the resources that they need to get the job done. We're going to be making sure that we hire 50 new prosecutors across Alberta to make sure that we can deal with the backlogs that often happen in our courts. We're going to be making sure that ALERT has the funding it needs to deal with these gangs. I do look forward this week, again, to meeting with the community organizations and start talking to them about a path forward.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and a special thank you to the Finance minister, who yesterday pledged to fully funding enrolment growth for Alberta students. It took weeks of questioning by this opposition and, of course, terrible stories

coming into the public about the lack of funding that the government had brought forward. Again, thank you for your announcement yesterday, Finance minister.

I want to give the Finance minister a chance to do good again today. Will he pledge to feeding the 33,000 students who rely on a school nutrition program and make sure that it's a priority in his upcoming budget? To the Minister of Finance.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We understand, value, and very much appreciate this program. As we saw with enrolment growth funding, the NDP is using speculation and scare tactics to create undue stress in our education system.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pretty sure it was the fact that the government failed to actually commit to funding.

Given that it was the fact that the government failed to commit to funding that led to 220 fewer teachers in the Calgary board of education, not this Official Opposition asking the government if they'd fund it, I think that that is completely off the mark, so to the Education minister: will you ensure that you personally talk to every single school board to see that any damage done by the minister's inaction and any job losses will be reversed; make sure that those teachers get hired back, who were let go because of the government's inaction for weeks to give . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I appreciate your efforts to make adjustments, but I think we could all agree that a preamble was used.

The hon. Minister of Education.

2:20

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I've always been available. My office doors are open. I'm speaking to all the stakeholder groups and will be continuing to do so. We've been very clear from the beginning that we are committed to funding education. It is a priority. We will continue to build schools. School boards are in the best position to make their own budgets, so they have that responsibility.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. Given that just last week the Education minister at the eleventh hour cancelled a meeting with the Edmonton public school board, the second-largest school board in this province, and when they asked to reschedule that meeting, they were given a date far into the future, Mr. Speaker, will the minister demonstrate her open door policy, call the board today, and make sure that they book that meeting as soon as possible so that more teachers don't get laid off while this government dithers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I would have to turn that back over to the opposition. I had to cancel because of the filibustering that took place, and I had to reschedule. My next available time I did give to them. They are a large school division. I value their input. Unfortunately, I didn't have a block of time sufficient to give to them except further down the road. So it's on you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Members of the Official Opposition, I think I'm fairly lenient with when and how we heckle. I just might prefer you to do so when I am not on my feet.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Minimum Wage for Youth

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's own caucus is doing its job to point out to the minister of labour just how damaging the attack on youth wages really is. Yesterday the Member for Calgary-Cross rightfully pointed out that youth will earn "significantly less." He went on to say that students work hard for their money, that students are saving for school or to put food on the table. I agree. To the minister of labour: if you won't listen to me, will you listen to your own caucus and stop the attack on youth wages?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. As stated before, the student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. We made this as a commitment in our platform, and I know that our entire caucus supports this to get Alberta youth back to work. We are not afraid of the tough questions on this issue from any members in this House so that we can actually point out the concerns and misinformation that are out there and issues that are raised by constituents. This is about creating jobs for youth, and that is what we'll do.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Member for Calgary-Cross also said that the impact of the attack on youth wages would be felt especially hard in "lower income areas" and given that this government has moved to cut people's pay before offering anything new in the way of social supports or housing supports, to the same minister: how can you be sure that paying Alberta's young workers less than the minimum wage won't leave some of them unable to afford the basics?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is about creating opportunities for our youth. The previous government raised the minimum wage to \$15, nearly 50 per cent, in the face of one of the worst economic downturns in Alberta history, and this left thousands of youth without the opportunity for any work. We need to fix this. We are in a youth job crisis. This needed to be addressed so that youth can get on the job-creation wage, start earning, and contribute, whether it be to their families or for their education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister revealed yesterday that the Calgary Stampede has chosen not to utilize the UCP's age-based wage discrimination and given that the minister said that government reached out to the Stampede after media reported that they may be retroactively cutting youth wages, to the minister: do you intend to call every business considering to cut youth pay? Will you counsel each of them to keep it at \$15 per hour? Minister, do you not see that it is mind-boggling that you're celebrating that the Stampede is refusing to pay your new discriminatory wage?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Copping: Thank you. As the member opposite knows, the minimum wage is just that, a minimum. Employers may choose to pay higher than that, and in fact the Calgary Stampede chose to do that. The reason why I raised that point yesterday is to be able to demonstrate that a minimum is just a minimum. This is about addressing the issue created by the previous government, which eliminated tremendous amounts of opportunity for our youth in Alberta. This is about creating an environment where businesses can create jobs for Alberta youth. Mr. Speaker, \$13 an hour is better than zero dollars per hour.

Rocky View School Division Concerns

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that Airdrie is booming. It has been one of the fastest growing cities for quite some time. Last week CBC news reported that classrooms across the Rocky View school division, which covers my constituency of Airdrie-East, are amongst the most crowded in all of Alberta. Minister, can you please tell my constituents where the Rocky View school division lies on your ministry's priority list?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. I do realize the pressures that that area is under. Just for your awareness, for schools to be considered for modernization funding, school districts must submit a proposal to the government outlining their request. Once received, my department analyzes the request and prioritizes applications as a result of a series of metrics. More details on specific funding allocations will be released when we table the budget this fall.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that, again, that's the most attention that the Airdrie school district has seen in the last four years while the class sizes are bursting at the seams and given that the United Conservative Party's campaign promise was to build new schools, Minister, can you please tell the parents and students in my constituency how this government will address the class size, overcrowding problem in Airdrie?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our platform committed to an audit of the class sizes. My department is already undertaking that good work. Our government is committed to strengthening education by working with our students, our parents, our teachers, our principals, our trustees, and other education stakeholders. As Minister of Education I am focused on strengthening our education system and delivering on our platform commitments, which schools are a part of.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Airdrie-East for the second supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for those responses. Given that 76 per cent of the schools in the Rocky View school division have already surpassed a provincially set target for a desired class size and given that the school board is constantly shuffling grades around various schools trying to do their best to address our growth issues, Minister, my constituents want to

know when new schools will be built in the Rocky View school division.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question, and to the hon. member, thank you. We were elected with a mandate to continue to build schools. I am looking forward to receiving updates on capital project proposals and working with my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure – in fact, we actually met earlier today – to ensure that we can modernize and build new schools across this province.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung is rising.

Support for Agriculture in Wildfire-affected Areas

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last month has been a stressful one for residents of northern Alberta, particularly those who have had to leave their homes and those who have lost their homes. Farmers in northern Alberta produce 21 per cent of our crops as well as 10 per cent of our provincial livestock and are vital to our provincial well-being. Wildfires affect their growing season and threaten their livelihoods. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how many farms have been evacuated as a result of wildfires this year, and what supports, particularly, are available to them?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for that very important question. This government is committed to helping the farmers that are affected in that area, that have been evacuated, and where the crop damage has occurred. As with the evacuees, that is something that this government is going to take very seriously.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope to hear more details on that in subsequent answers by the minister.

Mr. Speaker, our government understood the need to take action on climate change to support and protect all Albertans given that scientific evidence indicates wildfires are made more likely and extreme due to climate change and given that so far this year an area almost five times larger than the average five-year burn has burned, contrary to the Premier's assertion that the current situation is, quote, unquote, average, and given that we know that smoke in the air decreases the growing season, as occurred in 2018, to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry once again: do you have any plans to provide actual support for farmers?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to go into more details on the BRM programs, business risk management programs, crop insurance that farmers have. That assessment has to be done at the end of the growing season, and it is something that we will work with the farmers on through this difficult growing season in northern Alberta.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you. I look forward to hearing those details.

Mr. Speaker, given that bees are vital to all areas of agriculture and given that northern Alberta produces some of the best honey in

the world and given that honey is a vital component of food production in Alberta, including honey wineries and meateries – there was a lot of buzz around that in the province – and given that smokey skies cause bees to forage less, reducing production volumes, and given that we are being told that poor air quality due to wildfires and climate change could be the new normal, to the same minister: what plans does your ministry and government have to protect and support beekeepers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again, for bee producers, any type of farmer here in Alberta we have a great BRM suite of programs that they can apply for, whether it's crop insurance, whether it's livestock insurance, whether it's beekeepers' insurance. We work with all farmers to make sure that they can be as sustainable as possible and also compete on the global stage.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

2017 UCP Leadership Campaign Investigations

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday when I asked the Minister of Justice if his government would support the Election Commissioner's ongoing investigation into irregular financial contributions that emerged as a result of the UCP's kamikaze scandal, the minister accused me of "relitigating" the past. But there were new finds in this matter as recently as Friday, with the possibility of more. I'll give the minister a second chance. Were you really suggesting that because you won the election, any transgression by the Premier or his inner circle no longer matters?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of this question. I would gladly answer questions about government business. We're not here to relitigate the campaign in the past. If we want to go through the campaign in the past – jobs, economy, pipelines – 55 per cent of Albertans, a million voters, voted for the agenda that this party put forward in the most detailed platform in Alberta history. We're not going to get distracted by allegations. We're going to be focused on jobs of the future.

Ms Ganley: That sounds dangerously close to being above the law. Given that yesterday I asked if the government would commit to not interfere with an ongoing investigation – practically, Mr. Speaker, a puffball – and given that the minister called the question "fear and smear" and not important to the people of Alberta and given that the Conservatives in 2008 got rid of the very same Election Commissioner for standing up for democracy, Minister, will you clear up the confusion you caused yesterday and vouch for the independence of the commissioner and confirm that you won't stand in his way?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, the Election Commissioner is free to investigate as he sees fit. Again, we're not going to be distracted by issues of past campaigns. We're focused on jobs of the future. We're focused on making sure that we do what Albertans sent us here to do, which is to implement the most detailed platform in Alberta history. We have the most detailed platform, over 300 commitments that we made. We're in the process right now of implementing that platform. Promises made; promises kept.

Ms Ganley: Given, Mr. Speaker, that Friday was almost two months after the election campaign and given that this government's own throne speech referenced democratic reform

legislation in 2020 and given that it would be highly inappropriate to change any election financing law during an active investigation into contributions in the leadership race that the Premier was a part of and since that same campaign is also the subject of an RCMP investigation into voter fraud, can the minister commit that this government will not attempt to change the very legislation these investigations are relying on or replace those involved until the investigation . . .

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I rise again just to mention the fact that the Election Commissioner is free to investigate as he sees fit.

We're here, again, focused on the priorities of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. We're going to make sure that we focus on jobs, the economy, pipelines, and getting Albertans back to work. We have a jobs crisis right now in Alberta. That's our focus. Also, the opposition was not funding law enforcement priorities. We're going to make sure that our front-line law enforcement officials have the resources that they need. We're not focused on light bulbs and shower heads; we're focused on jobs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Choice in Education

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's legacy of school choice has long been seen as a model. Other governments have come to Alberta in order to study our system and learn how to apply it in other jurisdictions. Under the previous government, school choice came under attack. Whether it was the suppression of charter, private, independent, or even home-school programs, the previous NDP government took actions that harmed children in these programs and made life more difficult for teachers and loving parents. Will the Minister of Education commit to supporting school choice in Alberta today?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. Alberta has a long and proud, successful tradition of supporting school choice, and our government is committed to preserving and protecting educational choice. Our government is committed to introducing the choice in education act – I'm looking forward to bringing it forward in the fall – which will affirm that parents have primary responsibility for education of their children.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that charter schools increase options and opportunities for specialization and given that both Alberta's cap on charter schools and its enrolment cap have reduced these opportunities, will the Minister of Education commit to supporting Alberta's charter schools through expanding the rights of such schools and removing the cap on the number of charter schools it allows in the province of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Charter schools play an important role in Alberta's educational system by offering more choice to students and their parents. Once it is brought into force, the Education Act will lift the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in this province. Under our government, charter schools will continue to play a key role in our education system.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the United Nations has stated that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” and given that independent schools in Alberta save the public education system \$168 million annually and given that Newell Christian School in my riding of Brooks-Medicine Hat adds immense value by preparing students spiritually, academically, socially, and physically, will this government commit to protecting both the status and the funding of independent schools in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member for the question. Our platform was very clear. We will protect the status and funding of independent schools. More information on funding will be available in the near future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in approximately 30 seconds we will move to points of order. Please, if you are leaving the Chamber for other commitments, do so in an expedient manner.

Hon. members, the Official Opposition House Leader is rising on a point of order that was called at 1:59 and I believe again at 2:01.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Mr. Bilous: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If it pleases you and the House, I’m happy to combine the two points of order because they deal with the same subject. Shall I continue?

The Speaker: I would love that.

Mr. Bilous: Although I’m happy to speak twice as long, twice as often.

I’m rising on 23(h), (i), (j), Mr. Speaker. This is in regard to comments that the Government House Leader made regarding their legislation bringing in the strongest protections for kids regarding GSAs. If you’ll indulge me, I want to point to a couple of different examples of legislation that exists in other provinces that prove that the House leader’s comments are false, that there are stronger protections in other jurisdictions.

2:40

Really, the crux of my point in getting up with this point of order, Mr. Speaker, is that this isn’t a matter of opinion. It’s here in black and white. Their government has, through Bill 8, their policy on GSAs, and we’re comparing it to other parts of the country because the Government House Leader stood up and said: no, that’s false; ours is the strongest. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think that if members are allowed to speak inaccurately in this House when facts are in front of us in black and white, in printing, then it detracts from the very purpose of this place. Quite frankly, you know, then at any point anyone can say anything and it doesn’t matter; facts are completely irrelevant in this place.

I will point out a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. First of all, New Brunswick’s policy regarding GSAs: their policy E-9 is anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism policy.

School District 10 is an inclusive anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism organization.

In order that all members of the school committee learn and work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety, free from homophobia, transphobia, anti-gay harassment and/or heterosexism, District 10 recognizes its obligation to adopt

appropriate administrative procedures and strategies, which shall ensure respect for human rights, support diversity, address discrimination, and create a learning environment . . .

District 10 recognizes that LGBTQ students, staff, and same-gender-parented families have the right to:

- self-identification and freedom of expression;
- be treated fairly, equitably and with dignity;
- inclusion, representation and affirmation;
- freedom from harassment, discrimination and violence; and,
- avenues of recourse . . . when they are victims of harassment.

Now, procedure 1, Mr. Speaker:

All employees of School District 10:

- have a responsibility to eliminate homophobia and heterosexism in the working and learning environment.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I recognize the point that you are making. It does come in the form of what sounds to me to be debate about dispute of the facts. You did ask for me to indulge you, so I will be happy to do that for a little bit longer, but if we’re going to go through every jurisdiction, I’m not sure that is the primary point of points of order. So please feel free to proceed but know that that is the direction that we’re heading.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, the point of this is that it is in black and white. This isn’t a matter of debate or a difference of opinion. Bill 8 is in black and white, of what the government is proposing, which is not the strongest legislation protecting the LGBTQ community or GSAs.

There is a very simple difference even between Ontario and Alberta in that in Ontario there is a section that prohibits boards and principals from refusing to use the name of gay-straight alliance or a similar name for certain organizations.

In the current legislation, Mr. Speaker, there is no timeline, which means that principals can defer a decision forever. That doesn’t make their legislation stronger. For me, the concern here is that we have it in black and white: the current legislation brought in by the previous government versus what this government is proposing. Members opposite cannot continue to stand up in this House to say, “ours is the strongest” when it is factually incorrect. That is the crux of this point of order, that it’s not a difference of opinion. It’s that facts are not debated. It’s not opinion; it is fact printed in legislation.

The Speaker: Thank you for your interjections.

The hon. Government House Leader is rising to provide some comments.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly the hon. Opposition House Leader is attempting to debate legislation. There will be an opportunity to debate Bill 8, which I think is the bill that’s before the House, that he is referring to, later today in fact. I would be interested in hearing his comments then.

There was also an opportunity to debate Bill 10, which was the bill that I primarily referred to during question period. I don’t think it’s appropriate to use points of order to try to re-debate bills that have already passed this Chamber or to debate bills that are coming up at a later point. I will be very quick, Mr. Speaker, because the Opposition House Leader basically attempted to make several members’ statements during his point of order.

To be very, very clear, our point is this: we continue to support Bill 10, which was passed by both the legacy parties that make up the United Conservative Party and the now government of Alberta. It was supported by the NDP members opposite at the time. We will continue to do that: to protect kids, to make sure that bullying is not

taking place inside our schools, and to recognize the importance of gay-straight alliances. That will remain. We believe that we have the strongest protection in the country and amongst other provinces. If we have some debate later on this legislation, we could have that conversation.

But, clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of debate, and the Opposition House Leader should not be using his points of order to try to bring forward debate on outstanding legislation.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Well, I might just suggest that this is very clearly a case in which this is a dispute of the facts. If the Speaker was put in a position where he had to rule or she had to rule every time one particular set of people inside the Chamber believed one set of facts and another group inside the Chamber believed another set of facts and the Speaker was put in a position to determine what set of facts is, in fact, correct, we would be perpetually asking the Speaker to determine who is saying what is right, is correct, and/or not.

I might just point to a tabling that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning tabled yesterday that I would suggest could create robust debate around the facts that she had used for evidence to strengthen a point of debate. This is exactly what we have, which is a point of debate. I might remind all members of the Assembly to refer to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 639, when it reminds members to not “engage in debate . . . under the guise of a point of order.”

I see the Official Opposition House Leader is rising on a point of order.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Bilous: Standing Order 13(2). I endeavour to ask if, then, the standing orders are just a matter of discussion as opposed to guidelines for this place, sir.

The Speaker: I would suggest there is a very wide range of facts that members will bring to the Assembly, one that I just pointed out to the hon. members. I would suggest that members of the Official Opposition believe one thing to be true, say, about a railcars contract, and the members of the government believe another thing to be true. This is very clearly a dispute of the facts, and while the Leader of the Official Opposition might not agree with my ruling, it is the ruling that's been made. We are carrying on. This concludes this point of order.

Orders of the Day

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Glasgo moved, seconded by Ms Rosin, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate June 10: Mr. Milliken]

The Speaker: Are there those wishing to speak? The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great opportunity for me to rise and to respond on behalf of Alberta's NDP Official Opposition to the throne speech and take this opportunity as well to address some of the matters that we've just, in fact, been speaking about here, the whole issue of sort of truth in the posttruth world and all that kind of stuff, but we'll get to that. I'm very proud to rise.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I want to first recognize, Mr. Speaker, that we are gathered here today on the traditional territory of Treaty 6, and I want to acknowledge the Métis people of Alberta, who share a very deep connection with this land. Land acknowledgements are an act of reconciliation. The act of making a statement to recognize the traditional territory of the indigenous people who called this land home long before the arrival of settlers is an important first step in the path to reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been very clear about this. So when we learned that this new government no longer sees land acknowledgements as a necessary component of public addresses by government representatives, I was surprised and disappointed, and I wasn't alone in that reaction. Indeed, First Nations leaders like Treaty 6 Grand Chief Dr. Wilton Littlechild are disheartened by this government's refusal to acknowledge treaties between First Nations and the Crown at public events and functions.

2:50

The process of reconciliation must be taken seriously by all levels of government, not just when it's convenient, and before we can even begin to have conversations about reconciliation, we need to at the very least acknowledge the histories of our two people and the treaties that define those relationships. This decision is unnecessary, this decision by the government, and it takes the good-faith steps that we've been making towards renewing our relationship with First Nations and Métis people in Alberta backwards. In light of the recently released final report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, an inquiry that the now Premier was not in support of having occur, the fact is that the need to take positive steps on the path to reconciliation is especially crucial. Now is not the time to lose ground on reconciliation. We must continue to move forward. Now, I feel very strongly about this, Mr. Speaker.

Also, let me be clear that I believe that the government's current response to people who raise this issue is also very disrespectful. They argue that their plan to create an indigenous opportunities corporation is all that needs to be done to show reconciliation. This is desperately wrong. While we do not take any issue with the idea of the new corporation – indeed, it is a new take on a series of initiatives that we were already considering and putting into play – it is not in and of itself the answer to reconciliation.

This corporation will facilitate money lending to indigenous groups who are participating in economic endeavours of which this government approves, and there is nothing wrong with that, but it denies the fact that a nation-to-nation relationship obviously allows that some First Nations may want to pursue different avenues for community and economic and social development. That is their right. But to suggest their primary mechanism of pursuing a productive nation-to-nation relationship or meaningful recognition of the need to pursue reconciliation or to enact the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples is just one more example of disrespect. Mr. Speaker, we must do better than just that. It is not simply a matter of saying: we're lending a few groups that agree with us money; therefore, our obligation to pursue reconciliation has now been fulfilled. It has

not, and I hope that this government will reconsider this issue because they are in the wrong place right now on this matter.

Now, before I go further, I would be remiss if I didn't, as one typically does in these throne speech responses, offer another round of thanks to the constituents of Edmonton-Strathcona. You've put your faith in me for the last 11 years and have asked me to serve for another four. This is not an honour I take for granted, and I thank you. It is my great privilege, though, today to not only offer this response as the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona but also in my new role as Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

The members opposite have already taken to suggesting that the fact that we were not returned to that side of the House is somehow an indication that I and my opposition colleagues are somehow at odds with Albertans should we offer up a critical analysis of the government's agenda or ultimate record or do anything to hold them accountable. Now, acceptance of this argument would include, of course, acceptance of the notion that our parliamentary system, the role of the opposition, and the very act of rigorous debate had been rejected by Albertans in the last election. This, of course, is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. I would counsel members of the government to govern with humility and to remember that their mandate remains intact by respecting this Legislature, the democratic system upon which it rests, and, ultimately, the right of Albertans to be heard and accommodated through the next term of this Assembly.

It's with this mandate in mind that I rise to identify the common ground we share with members of this government while at the same time noting the areas where we believe that mistakes are being made and that the best interests of Albertans are being jeopardized.

Allow me to begin with the areas of agreement between our opposition caucus and the government caucus. There's absolutely no doubt that job creation and the economy were top of mind for Albertans in the last election and continue to be top of mind going forward. I think there is a great deal of agreement between our caucus and the government caucus on the urgent need to ensure that Albertans have more jobs, not fewer jobs. We all understand the stress and the anxiety that people experience when out of work, worrying about how to pay the bills, plan for the future, and support their family.

We all understand that with a historic drop in the price of oil confounded more recently by the inability of our oil and gas producers to get their product to market, Alberta's economy has been hit hard, and if it wasn't obvious before, the linkage between investment in the oil and gas sector and investment into many other sectors of the economy came into stark relief as jobs throughout the economy were negatively impacted. So it is true that we are all very seized with the need to create jobs. Now, let me go a bit further and say that we on this side of the House are also seized with the need to preserve jobs. Layoffs, say in the public sector, are not a means to creating jobs in the private sector.

I will admit that while we on this side of the House put a great deal of thought and planning into our strategy to create jobs, we were not as successful as we could have been in sharing either our record of job creation or a plan going forward with Albertans. As leader the responsibility for that shortcoming, of course, lies with me, but I do not believe that that should be allowed to undermine the merit of our plans going forward. Indeed, I believe they should be seriously considered by this House.

We had proposed more jobs, actually, than the current government has with their massive \$4.5 billion tax cut for wealthy corporations. Our plan centred around putting some more support behind petrochemical diversification. This was a tried-and-true strategy. Indeed, our initial \$1 billion investment earlier in the term had drawn in \$13 billion in private capital investment and already

created 10,000 new jobs. This is to be contrasted with the plan of the current government, which involves a \$4.5 billion tax cut in return for a \$12 billion bump in economic activity, this according to their own numbers.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Frankly, this is a starkly unimpressive performance rate, and it should be contrasted with our plan moving forward: \$7 billion in energy value-added investments that was estimated to attract roughly \$70 billion – \$70 billion – in incremental private-sector investment over 10 years along with 70,000 jobs. Now, these estimates did not even take into account the additional economic activity that would arise from secondary investment coming from the production of new feedstock materials in the petrochemical sector. Now, we don't really know where this government stands on that program or any other efforts to diversify and get us off the boom-and-bust roller coaster. Not yet. We do know that they're moving backwards on carbon pricing and, in so doing, jeopardizing thousands of current jobs and walking away from the technological innovation and diversification work that was paired with that pricing. We know their corporate tax cut will blow a big hole in our fiscal foundation, and it's very risky.

For one, this government's own platform projects it won't generate a single dollar of economic return for at least two years. Frankly, other experts suggest that even that projection is overly optimistic. But let's go with that one: at least two years, Madam Speaker. With the loss of 19,000 full-time jobs in May alone, I would argue that Albertans want and need action now, and what we have is a plan to theoretically, under a best-case scenario, assuming the one economist out of the 10 economists is correct, create jobs beginning in 2021. I say "theoretically" because, as I've said before, it hasn't worked elsewhere.

Let's first look at the state of Kansas, where this experiment was supposed to deliver a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy. When it was all said and done, the *Washington Post* instead described it as "a shot of poison." Now, the Governor of Kansas had promised that eliminating corporate taxes for nearly 200,000 businesses would create 23,000 jobs, and he put his plan into action in 2013. The total hit to the state treasury was actually much less than the \$4.5 billion that we have projected getting lost by Alberta's treasury. Nonetheless, it was a big cut. More importantly, it didn't work. Now the so-called Kansas experiment is ridiculed, and it sends shivers down the spines of job creators throughout the U.S. Job growth during the time of zero corporate taxes was slower than the national average, and the state debt load doubled. The greatest damage was felt – guess what? – in schools. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

It got so bad that the Kansas Supreme Court ruled that one-quarter of students in the state were receiving such a poor education as a result of the budget cuts that it violated the state constitution. That's right. Students were being taught in illegal conditions to finance a corporate tax cut which did not create jobs or economic growth. Now, I'm not saying that we're in quite those circumstances yet, but this Premier's own Alberta experiment has only just begun.

Now, after weeks of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora grilling them and pointing out countless examples of how not funding enrolment would harm our schools, this government caved. Credit to them for doing that, I suppose. There are 15,000 new students coming this fall, and they deserve an incremental bump in teachers and classroom space for their learning.

3:00

But that's just the start, Madam Speaker. We know that more support is needed, especially for areas where students may be

struggling, like reading and writing and numeracy. That was the intent behind our introduction of the classroom improvement fund, that and supporting special-needs students. The fund was due to add another 400 teachers to our schools this fall on top of the 600 we would see added to address enrolment.

There's more. We know that students can't learn on an empty stomach. That should be an obvious thing, but given how long it took for us to get this program in place, apparently it wasn't quite as obvious as we thought. Nonetheless, we knew it. That's why we introduced a school nutrition pilot program. Our intent was to rapidly expand it. We were getting such good results. Our \$15.5 million investment each year was feeding 33,000 students every single school day. As the Member for Lethbridge-West has told me, some schools had actually taken it upon themselves to send food home with students on the weekend, too.

Prior to the election call we were close to finalizing a report on just how positive of an impact this program had. I would implore the government to release that report very soon, before coming to any conclusions as a result of their blue-ribbon panel. The initial feedback that we heard was very positive, Madam Speaker. Students participating in the pilot were better focused in class, their attitudes were better, and their academic results were trending in a positive direction. This was a relatively small investment when you consider the extent of the positive benefits. Schools were also teaching kids about food preparation, sanitization, how to share. A lot of good came from something so very simple.

So far we've heard nothing from this government on whether they will fund the classroom improvement fund that I just described or the nutrition pilot project. Let us be clear that enrolment funding is not the Holy Grail. It is simply the very beginning of the starting line. Even with funding enrolment, which I truly believe this government had no intention of doing prior to pressure from both this opposition and parents and school boards, I now worry where else this government will look to deepen the cuts they plan.

I fear, for example, that those who are sick or in need of care will also suffer or perhaps suffer more. We've already seen warnings from front-line paramedics that as many as five ambulances are being kept off Calgary streets at any given time. This leads to code reds, Madam Speaker, which means there's not a single available ambulance to respond to an emergency. This is dangerous and disturbing. This government hasn't even introduced a budget yet. That leads me to think that this is just the tip of the iceberg at best.

Again, we have seen this elsewhere. Now, in Kansas after four years of failure both the Kansas state House and the state Senate voted to end these ridiculous cuts. The experiment came to an end, but boy had a lot of damage been done over the time it took for them to learn their lesson. We have a chance to stop this experiment basically before it starts, before the damage is done in our schools and our hospitals.

Now, I'm sure the government will say that it's not apples to apples and that I'm simply cherry-picking the worst examples of where these types of tax cuts have failed. But, frankly, U.S. President Donald Trump has attempted similar changes since the Kansas experiment and hasn't really had much better in the way of results. Telecom giant AT&T promised his administration that it would hire 7,000 new employees if its corporate taxes were cut by \$1 billion. The Trump government obliged. What did they get in return? AT&T cut 23,000 jobs.

I could go on and on about where these cuts have failed south of the border, but here in Canada tax giveaways to wealthy corporations haven't actually fared much better. The Premier's own cabinet buddies tried something similar. He has seen first-hand what happens. The Harper government pledged to cut corporate

taxes by 7 per cent over four years to create jobs and spur economic renewal. It didn't work. Instead, corporations stockpiled the savings they had realized. Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney came to call these funds "dead money," dead as in not generating any economic activity, Madam Speaker. They totalled more than \$500 billion at one point.

I guess time will tell what happens here in Alberta, Madam Speaker, but past precedent tells us that this Premier is pulling our economic future and the academic future of our children in a very risky spot. I've yet to see him stand in this House with evidence to prove that any of this will work other than the report of one single economist. This government has resisted calls by members of our opposition to slow down the corporate tax reduction. I believe the member for Edmonton-City Centre proposed dropping the rate at least to 10 per cent first, rather than going straight to 8. He argued: let's give it time to assess the impact and determine whether it's really creating jobs. But the members opposite voted against that very prudent suggestion.

I guess that's really it. The experiment is a go, and the budget hole it generates is larger than any we've seen in any other jurisdiction. We are talking about blowing a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget over four years.

What's more is that this government also served notice yesterday that it really is continuing on its plan to cancel the oil-by-rail contracts. Now, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar brought a motion forward yesterday looking for support for the contracts from both sides of the aisle. It was voted down by the government caucus. These contracts stand to generate \$2 billion in net profit for the Alberta Treasury. And just let me be clear. By net I mean that it will cost \$3.7 billion and would generate roughly \$5.7 billion. Now this should seem obvious, but judging from comments made by members opposite during the motion and the debate of that motion yesterday, it appears that the need to explain "net" cannot actually be overstated, Madam Speaker. Hopefully, people get that now.

Regardless, we are now hearing that the Premier will legislate his way out of these contracts if he has to, and he's doing this as we learn that line 3 is facing further delays, and the Premier said last week that he's likely to extend curtailment into 2020. Now, I'm not saying that our government would necessarily have been able to end curtailment given the current line 3 situation, but what we do know is that a way to reduce the intensity and the volume of curtailment is to move our product by rail. With no pipeline to tidewater, delays to line 3 and KXL, and a backlog of demands on rail cars, we were in a difficult position, and that's why we signed the contracts. We did what was necessary.

Meanwhile, members opposite are so focused on running on an ideological platform that they repeat their platitudes and their talking points endlessly. The private sector will do it; the private sector will do it. A significant portion of the private sector that was moving oil by rail leading up to last fall was that portion of the private sector that enjoyed the benefit of buying the oil for \$8 a barrel and selling it down to their sister companies in the southern U.S. at \$40 or \$50. Yes, those folks were using rail, and in the process Albertans were getting taken to the cleaners. The rest of the private sector was not using rail to the degree that they needed, and small producers were being pushed right out of the market. As a result, we were getting a situation where distressed barrels were being sold for \$8 or less a barrel, thereby increasing the profit of certain groups and undermining overall the return to Albertans by unestimatable amounts of money. That's how it worked when we left it to the private sector. Albertans lost and most oil and gas companies lost. That's what the members opposite seem committed to returning to, and that was the situation that we were trying to avoid.

What's more is that while this Premier ran on a platform of jobs, economy, and pipelines, he seems to be ignoring the first two, jobs and the economy, and waiting on the third, with no end in sight. We'll see. Now he's looking for people to blame. As our Finance critic said yesterday, his path to balance is really "a path to baloney." Relying on who our Finance critic quite rightly referred to as the Premier's "favourite stenographer," the Premier is actually out there saying things which are not correct, in particular suggesting that there's some sort of conspiracy between our government and the public service to cook the Alberta Treasury books. This is insulting, Madam Speaker. It's insulting to the integrity of the officials who worked on the budget, many of whom now advise the Premier. It's insulting to the budgeting process, which is heavily scrutinized and audited. Indeed, the Conference Board of Canada, you know, that left-leaning ideological apologist organization for New Democrats, gave our government top marks in the country for the transparency and the accountability of our financial reporting, and this was due in large part to the public officials this Premier is now preparing to discredit as he begins yet another campaign of truthiness to the people of Alberta.

It's so clearly obvious that what this Premier is actually trying to do is find a scapegoat for the \$6.5 billion hole he plans to blow into the Alberta budget. He won't balance the budget one year earlier than us, in 2022. In fact, with what he's currently trial ballooning, he may not even balance it in this term. Promise made; promise broken. But I guess we're not supposed to worry about all this because we have a new \$30 million war room, Madam Speaker.

3:10

Now, to be clear, in some ways this is simply a continuation of the work that our government had already done and was already doing. We'd established a Market Access Task Force that consisted of key leaders from within the energy sector. We had set aside significant funds to advertise across the country to build nationwide public support for the need to build a pipeline to tidewater. These are things that we were doing, and our work had been paying off. The level of support for the pipeline had grown from about 4 in 10 to 6 in 10 across the country, and this was important. We did this by arguing the economics, by talking about how this created jobs not just in Alberta but across the country. We talked to Canadians about how much this meant for their economic security.

We also spoke to those who worried about the environment. We talked to them about how our climate leadership plan delinked pipeline construction from the issue of greenhouse gas emissions coming from the oil sands. What we didn't do was spend that money picking fights with Canadians, polarizing people on the issue, and dialing up the intensity of opposition to Alberta's and Canada's dire need for a pipeline to tidewater. That is to be contrasted with the Premier's current plan for his so-called war room. As a start, this appears to be the Premier's way of pitting the economy and the environment against one another once again.

Now, I will say that I don't agree with some of these folks that the Premier will be targeting either. I really don't. I'm not convinced, however, that suing Tzepporah Berman does a thing to help Albertans. Instead, it does do a lot to make lawyers richer, much richer, even though there's no evidence that we will be remotely successful in these costly court cases. What we will do, however, is backstop the Premier's desire to play divisive politics on the national stage, politics that are more focused on his partisan federal aspirations than the economic goals of Albertans. Ultimately, we should be focused on generating jobs for Albertans, full stop. The way to do that is to embrace both our energy sector and our environmental responsibilities, get pipelines built while also delivering on a real plan to combat climate change.

This Premier doesn't do that. He merely states that other countries pump more emissions into the air in some misguided way to offload our responsibility to those across the world. That's not leadership, Madam Speaker. Leadership is building consensus across every province and demonstrating that Alberta really is a responsible energy producer that is doing its part to combat climate change. As I said, when we were doing this work, we had grown support in Canada for the Trans Mountain pipeline significantly. We pushed the federal government for the first approval of Trans Mountain. We successfully demonstrated the limited ability of the B.C. government to interfere. We pushed the federal government to buy the pipeline when investor uncertainty threatened the future of the project.

If the Trans Mountain pipeline is approved by the federal government later this month, it will not be because of a war room that aims to strike down as some type of enemy to the state every single person who raises environmental concerns. On the contrary, if that pipeline is approved, it will be because of the work our government, many public service officials, and some allies in the energy sector did to build consensus across this country. Our strategy and the resulting success will prove that while the Premier currently is good at grabbing a microphone and yelling from the back of a truck, he may actually not know what's best for Alberta.

But I do fear, Mr. Speaker, that this Premier is so blinded by his ideology and his desire to make political hay that he's willing to openly ignore evidence that counters the positions he's taken, which takes me to Bill 1, the government's heavily touted plan to end the carbon tax. Now, obviously I have to acknowledge the success with which the Premier and his friends have created high levels of opposition to carbon pricing in Alberta and in some other parts of the country. As someone who respects the democratic system in which we operate, as much as I hope the people of Alberta will one day reconsider this issue, one cannot deny that carbon pricing was an issue in the election on which Albertans delivered to the Premier a mandate. That is true. However, I still do not believe that they gave the government a mandate to do nothing on climate change.

Now, I've spoken at length recently in this House about this government's unwillingness to tackle climate change. I've spoken about how it is bad for the environment and, therefore, the safety and quality of life of all Albertans to ignore this problem. I've also spoken about how ultimately it's going to be bad for the economy. Basically, this government's ongoing insistence on reverting to a place where the environment is pitted against the economy is absolutely and without question a recipe for failure.

I've just laid out their plan to go after those who would make tackling climate change a priority. We just talked about how that's also not a helpful way to go. We don't need McCarthyite investigations into people solely because they stand up to speak about the environment. We don't need an inquiry to look into who went to that group of 17-year-old high school students and suggested that they actually begin a demonstration and come to have their voices heard at a rally in front of the Legislature. Heaven forbid that this plan actually turns into that kind of thing. It will be a very, very dark day.

What I will say to the members opposite is this. I believe that somewhere down the road it will be proven that right now you are absolutely and completely on the wrong side of history and that your inaction on perhaps the single biggest threat facing our generation is deafening. That is all I will say at this point, probably more over the next four years, though.

Now, moving on, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the so-called open for business act, or what we call the pick-your-pockets legislation. It definitely shouldn't be called the open for business

act because it doesn't open a single business or make it easier to open a business. All it does is cut wages. It's the cheap labour act. Actually, as I'd said before, it's the pick-your-pockets bill. It's the pick-your-pockets bill because when it comes to regular people, it is an act to take away your overtime and steal your holiday pay. Oh, and as a bonus, anyone under the age of 18 gets a nice \$2-an-hour pay cut.

Now, Madam Speaker, Albertans work hard to put food on their tables and to take care of their families. They elected this Premier to create jobs. I hear him say it all the time. But, you know, they didn't elect this Premier to roll back banked overtime from time and a half to just straight time. During the election campaign this government told Albertans that they were going to change the banked overtime rules, but then they intentionally misled Albertans about the actual impact that this would have on their wallets. But the fact is this: no matter how they try to slice it, it's a cut. They, frankly, don't want to admit that it's a cut, but it's a cut.

The Premier backed away and said that there would be no negative impact on what people receive for overtime as a result of what was in their platform, and that was absolutely and completely and utterly false. It was untrue. It was untrue. He said it then, and people voted on the understanding that he would not in any way negatively impact their overtime, and then he introduced a bill to negatively impact their overtime. Then he came into the House and said: "Oh, no. I introduce this bill, but it doesn't negatively impact overtime." Then, of course, we had a conversation: "Well, let's just read the bill and see how it negatively impacts overtime." And then even after we did, he still said, "Oh, the bill doesn't say what it says." Apparently, it is now okay in this House to actually have a document in front of the House and say that it doesn't say what it says. That's a whole new standard for the post-truth world, Madam Speaker, I've got to say. But I'll talk about that in a moment.

Now, at the end of the day, it means less money in working people's bank accounts. In fact, roughly 400,000 Albertans who work overtime to care for themselves and their families – Albertans in oil and gas, construction, and the skilled trades – will be hit the hardest. These are Albertans 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. In fact, we did the math, and if you're an oil and gas worker making average pay, putting in 10 overtime hours every week on a 12-week project, that is 120 hours in paid time off. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half versus straight time is over \$2,500 in monetary terms. That's a huge difference for working people. We're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars for people going above and beyond in the workplace day in and day out. No one in Canada would pass legislation that does this. In fact, none of them have a rule like this, just here in Alberta.

3:20

That's why we changed it in the first place, because people were losing money. They were getting forced into overtime agreements because the legislation, the way it was written, before we changed it, actually created an incentive for employers to use the tools of the act to force workers into these banked overtime agreements. The act allows them to force workers into these overtime agreements. And the Government House Leader is categorically, completely wrong and saying things which are not true when he says that workers can choose whether they want to be in these agreements. Anybody who is capable of reading legislation will very quickly understand that that is not the way the legislation is intended to be used, nor was it the way the legislation was being used before we changed the legislation so that there was no longer an incentive for employers to force workers into these arrangements.

And why? Why were they pushed so hard to change it by their big friends in Merit Contractors, who spent so much money putting up election signs for them for two years before the election? Because it means more money for the contractors and less money for workers. So they did it. It's that simple.

Anyway, the Premier says that he wants to go back to the way it was before, when people were not getting the overtime they deserved. That's not what he said during the election campaign, but that is exactly what he is doing. That was a time when Albertans earned less in overtime than workers in B.C. and Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I guess he'll have to explain to Albertans why he thinks they shouldn't be treated fairly, just like every other Canadian.

But, hey, why treat people fairly? Let's pay young people less than the minimum wage. Not since 1998, Madam Speaker, has any government thought to go back to such an unfair policy, not our government and not the PC governments before us. In fact, the government of the late Ralph Klein got rid of it in 1998. Ralph's team knew it was unfair. They knew that rolling back the minimum wage for people demonstrates a lack of compassion and a lack of respect for young workers. They knew that the value of your work should depend on the effort and the skill that you put into it, not on what year you were born or whether or not you have class the next day. What a silly set of criteria. What a ridiculous set of criteria.

The real criteria are: how can we give our friends more money and take money away from the people who need it the most and earn the least? They came up with this: what year were you born, and are you going to school tomorrow? It's ridiculous. Our policy put more dollars into the pockets of hard-working Albertans, who live, work, and spend their money here.

The last big change in the pick-your-pockets bill, of course, is what we refer to as being pure Grinch. It was the changes to holiday pay. This change means that when Christmas falls on a Saturday, hard-working parents here won't get the extra pay to cover off presents for the kids, but in Saskatchewan they will. This puts Alberta out of step with every other province in Canada by making an unfair distinction about regular versus nonregular workdays. In every other province holiday pay is owed to workers regardless of whether it falls on a worker's regularly scheduled day off. That includes B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. But under this government, no, no. Albertans will not get holiday pay or time in lieu when the holiday falls on a weekend, but workers just across the border will.

Then we're told, "Well, that's a way to create jobs," and, "You know, a minimum wage is just a minimum." Of course, the logical conclusion of that silly statement is: "Well, why have a minimum wage at all? We can trust everyone just to pay what's fair. Why have a minimum wage at all?" Oh – I don't know – because of 150 years of clear evidence that if you don't have a minimum wage, people are exploited. I think that, actually, Madam Speaker, that's why you have a minimum wage. It is quite an atrocious argument to have the labour minister say that it's just a minimum. It's as if the minister doesn't understand the legislation that he has been tasked to oversee.

Taken together, this pick-your-pockets bill does just that. At the same time that we're giving multibillion-dollar tax breaks to wealthy corporations, we are also taking even more money out of the pockets of working people and handing that over to these corporations as well. Exactly when is enough enough, Madam Speaker? Suffice to say that if the government wants to pass this bill, they too will have to work some more overtime. We debated this bill for more than 24 hours, the longest Wednesday on record, and we will keep doing that and keep fighting it because Albertans were promised more jobs, not smaller pay stubs, and right now we are on a path to: promise made, promise broken.

The list of misleading legislation goes on and on. The government's act to reduce red tape creates a new associate minister position, who conceivably is relying on public service officials, one would hope. Otherwise, he's getting paid the premium for nothing. What it does do is that it adds regulation-making power to the minister, and it requires him to generate reports on the red tape he's cut. What does all this amount to? Well, frankly, it amounts to more red tape. Very interesting that when he was first introduced by the Premier, the original title was the minister of red tape.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding all the elimination of the red tape that we are frankly doing, there's no transparency. The Premier said, when this bill was introduced, that 17 regulations had already been cut, but his associate minister couldn't name a single one. What's more, there's no plan for consultation or stakeholder meetings before we cut all this red tape. This bill does nothing except lead members' minds to wonder about just which pieces of red tape will face the dull scissors of the associate minister, unsharpened probably because, you know, we wouldn't want to have too many staffpeople in the ministry creating less red tape. Will he be going after regulations requiring routine food inspections? What about those requiring proper safety protocols on work sites? Or how about the regulations requiring surgical equipment to be sterilized before surgery? You really do have to wonder, Madam Speaker.

Then there's Bill 7, another piece of the Premier's apparent plan to create jobs. This piece of legislation, the municipal government amendment act, actually amounts to a public service announcement, one that reinforces powers that municipalities already have. The act is supposed to allow municipalities to defer or eliminate the collection of taxes to entice businesses to set up in their little part of Alberta relative to other parts of Alberta. But many municipalities have already taken advantage of section 347 of the current Municipal Government Act to do just these things. The city of Lethbridge established the targeted redevelopment incentive policy, called TRIP, and in May they approved a seven-year cancellation of taxes for a \$4 million development by Six08 Health Incorporated. In Chestermere the town council reported to local media that they had waived taxes for three years for a \$10 million building development.

As far as we can tell, Bill 7 accomplishes nothing except cause confusion because all of this authority was already there. Meanwhile, though, confusion is the thing. We're hearing from municipalities that they are frustrated, that they weren't consulted on this legislation, and there is a real fear that this legislation could spur a race to the bottom, with municipalities undercutting each other to compete for the attention of new business or developers, all part of this plan to shrink government and let individual residents shoulder the burden. Really, that is the long-term objective of these kinds of plans.

That's the Premier's plan for the economy. It's risky. It has bankrupted other jurisdictions. It refuses to consider or plan for future challenges, it's financed on the backs of workers, and it consists of at least a couple of pieces of legislation that are mostly communications tools that do nothing.

Let's turn away from the economy to perhaps the most disturbing piece of this government's agenda as outlined – well, it's not as overtly outlined in the throne speech, but it has been clearly demonstrated once we've seen the details of what was referenced in the throne speech. Now, before the throne speech, this Premier promised that he would not legislate on divisive social issues. That was his mantra. When asked about support for gay-straight alliances during the campaign, he told reporters he didn't get distracted by issues that weren't on the minds of voters. Yet here we are in his very first legislative session, and he's legislating

against LGBTQ youth. He is rolling back their rights, replacing four years of hard work our former Education minister did trying to improve the flimsy and weak Bill 10.

Let me just digress a little bit here. Now, I know that the other side love to – and in fact the Government House Leader already did today – rush to point out that our party and that I myself supported Bill 10. I will grant you that we did because Bill 10 was a second attempt to fix an outrageous bill that was brought in by the former PCs in the fall before Bill 10 was introduced. It was scandalous. They had to withdraw it. It was like Jim Crow legislation. They said that gay kids can meet away from the school, and in that way the scariness of them assembling together won't hurt the feelings of the other students who might see them all coming together and meeting. So they had to meet off-site.

3:30

Ms Hoffman: But they did say the word “gay.”

Ms Notley: They did say the word “gay” in that first round, but that was because, I think, they hoped no one would ever have to see the word or hear the word. Of course, they were going to be allowed to be pushed to locations outside of the school property. Anyway, it was offensive, and the members of the UCP's predecessor party, the PCs, had to back down from it because it was one of the most obnoxious pieces of legislation that we'd ever seen come into this House.

So then they brought in Bill 10 as an effort to stop the legislation that had previously been introduced as a private member's bill by an opposition member, the former Member for Edmonton-Centre. They brought in Bill 10, and on the face of it it seemed reasonable. It certainly didn't look as heinous as the thing that they had actually put their minds to creating a mere three or four months earlier.

Here's the thing. Then we got elected, and we discovered that there wasn't a whole bunch of new GSAs happening around the province. So we dug into it, and we discovered that, in fact, members of the UCP's predecessor party had quite intentionally constructed a piece of legislation that was not ever meant to be enforced and that was not ever meant to protect GSAs and to protect the vulnerable LGBTQ kids who need those GSAs. As soon as we dug in, we realized that they'd very thoughtfully written in a bunch of loopholes. What are those loopholes? Pretty simple. First of all, if in a public school a principal is asked to set up a GSA, the principal has no timeline within which to respond, so the principal can literally rag the puck for 18 months, and there's nothing to stop him from doing that.

The second thing that went on under the old Bill 10, which is what we are now returning to, is that there was nothing in the policy that prevented that same principal from otherwise systematically discouraging kids from asking for that GSA. Literally, that kid could be walking down a hall that was plastered with posters saying that marriage is between a man and a woman only – they could literally have that up in the hall – and then you'd be surprised that the LGBTQ kid in the school didn't ask for a GSA. Well, of course they're not going to ask for a GSA. The school as a whole is actively telling them that they are not valuable, that they are less than. These are things we heard about, Madam Speaker.

The third thing, of course, is that if a child actually goes to the principal after all these things are put in their way and insists upon asking for a GSA, then the principal can call up their parents and say: “Hey, did you know that your child here is looking to be part of the old GSA? You might want to know about that.” There goes privacy; there goes safety.

The final heinous part of Bill 10 is that it doesn't apply to private schools, many of which – I will say “some of which” – not the

majority of which, but some of which have discriminatory, hateful policies in place right now as we speak, some of which, actually, are going to court and using the Premier's best friend John Carpay, Mr. The Pride Flag is the Same as the Swastika, as their lawyer and relying on his rationale for challenging this legislation. Thankfully for Mr. The Pride Flag is the Same as the Swastika Carpay, the Premier has come to his rescue, and if this act goes forward, he will not need to continue on with that legal challenge. Boy, oh boy. People have really got to think about their friends and what that says about who they are because who your friends are says a lot about you.

That is what is in Bill 10. That is why when members opposite get up and say, "our education act will provide the strongest protections for LGBTQ kids in the country," we will continue to call points of order. The reason is this: because this is actually about a piece of legislation in this House. It is black and it is white, and if we cannot expect members of this House to engage truthfully in what it is they are doing when they bring this legislation into this House, this Assembly that belongs to the whole province of Alberta, to all the people of Alberta, if members opposite will not speak the truth about the ink that is on the paper that they are bringing into this House for us all to look at and read and debate and vote on, then this whole House is being fundamentally compromised in a way that is historic in nature. All of you should be ashamed of yourselves. The House leader should be ashamed of himself. The Education minister should be ashamed of herself.

As I said earlier, I actually believe the Attorney General needs to give some very serious consideration to whether or not he should be conferring with the Law Society or getting legal advice on whether the Law Society might be conferring with him because it is disingenuous at the highest level to come in here and suggest that Bill Hate, that piece of legislation, is the highest level of protection to LGBTQ people in the country. The reason I get passionate about this is because it is a life-and-death issue for kids in our schools. It is about their safety, it is about their future, and if we come in here and we can't even get simple questions like that right, then what in God's name are we doing in here? It is ridiculous.

You know, I will talk for a moment about a real story that we heard about from people who describe what attempts to have a GSA were like under this bill. But I need to say that just yesterday – just yesterday – I was at a car dealership in Edmonton, and a fellow came up, walked up to me, a fairly burly fellow. He came up, and he said, "Are you who you are?" I said: here we go; we're going to have a good old conversation about overtime and maybe we're going to have a good old conversation about, you know, Bill C-69 or the pipeline. He says, "Yeah, I moved here from the east coast." He said: "You know what? Thank you so much for everything you're doing." "Well, we're trying. We're trying to get jobs. We're doing everything we can. We're all working on it." He said: "No, not that. I was married with kids before I finally came out, and if my parents had discovered that I was gay when I was living at home in the Maritimes, I would've been beaten by my father, and I am so glad that I can be who I am now here, and I'm so glad that you guys are fighting to make sure nobody else goes through what I did." That's what this means.

Anyway, that was just yesterday. So this is not a random thing. This is what we all hear each and every day, and it's why I'm so offended by people across the aisle clinging to talking points which are not true, because they should do better. They should take ownership of the pain that they are intentionally inflicting on vulnerable children in this province, at least take ownership of it. Don't cling to empty talking points that are not true.

Jane MacNeil was a young woman who met with our former Minister of Education, the Member for Edmonton-North West. She met with him after she attempted to start a GSA in Calgary under

the bill that was previously in place. Jane's request was met with all forms of opposition. School officials attempted to change the name of the GSA, and then they pressured students within the GSA to vote against her and have the name of the GSA changed. Then she was sent to counselling, and she was told she was negatively impacting her school and creating a great deal of angst amongst students and staff. That is the kind of thing that happens when you don't have a policy in place to protect kids, and the policy, to be clear, is what is being eliminated by reverting to the old Bill 10 through Bill Hate. That's exactly what happened.

3:40

She said the whole experience was a like a slap in the face. She said that it was like everybody in the world hates you. Can you imagine that experience? So I hope that as this government attempts to ram through Bill Hate in this House, they think of Jane and what she went through and they understand that that's exactly what they are creating again and they think about that fellow that I met at the gas station and they understand that that's exactly what they are creating again. Now, Jane, thankfully, had the courage and the backing of some loving parents, and she was able to go public with her story. As we know, though, most students who need these organizations need them because they don't get that support from their parents, and they don't feel like they belong, and they feel vulnerable and scared.

It undermines them for much of the rest of their life even if they do finally find love and acceptance and welcoming because you shouldn't be going through this when you are that age. All kids need to feel that their sexual orientation, who they are, is okay. Basically, it comes down to this. It's okay, Madam Speaker, to be gay, and I'd love to see the Minister of Education actually say that in the House. I'd like see her use the word, and I'd like to see her actually tell school boards that they need to call these gay-straight alliances "gay-straight alliances" if that is what students want to call them, or "queer." Queer. Gay.

"Inclusion groups" is a way to whitewash it, and it is disrespectful, disrespectful to the people who are involved. At the end of the day, it is reflective and symbolic of the whole regime of discrimination that stands behind it and that stands behind the need for GSAs in the first place. Anyone that doesn't understand that – frankly, I think you understand it and you pretend that that's not what's going on. I think that's all that is really going on here. Folks here are not that obtuse; they understand it. They just believe that GSAs are bad, and they don't think that it's okay to be gay.

I want this government to know that we are going to fight Bill Hate with every tool that we have at our disposal, and we're going to keep fighting for all Albertans. We won't rest in this House until we have exhausted every tool to stop this government's plan to pick people's pockets. We won't rest until we have convinced them to start backing off their attack on youth wages, and we will keep fighting to protect properly funded schools and hospitals. We will keep standing up for Jane and the countless others who will be collateral damage as this government rams through its agenda.

Jobs, economy, pipelines: Madam Speaker, it's all well and good to have a catchy campaign phrase, but it's not what I see. I see no jobs. We lost 19,000 full-time positions in May. I see no economic success, only a risky experiment that has failed massively in other jurisdictions and caused illegal levels of underfunding to education in certain jurisdictions. I see no pipelines. Even if we get a pipeline, I don't believe it will be the doing of this government or its highly politicized, funding-the-political-aspirations-of-the-current-Premier war room. Lastly, what I don't see in that catchphrase is cutting people's pay, rolling back people's rights, and gutting the services that they rely on, yet that's what's happening.

We will fight this government at every avenue and hold them accountable for the decisions that they make because, to go back to my original points, Madam Speaker, we will not apologize for debating in this House. We will continue to insist at every possible turn that the members opposite tell the truth when talking about documents which are tabled in this House that are written in black and white. I appreciate that the member opposite would literally like to lift up a bill that says Bill 1 and insist that it says Bob 2, and he will do that indefinitely because he has that level of commitment to the facts, i.e. none. But we will continue to hold him to account, that when there is something in black and white on paper in writing that has theoretically earned the stamp of integrity that ought to be associated with this Assembly, we will make darn sure that the members opposite are held to account for actually not telling lies about what it means. That is the thing that we will continue to do.

In the meantime we will do that because we have been elected to be the Official Opposition in this province. I am quite sure that no matter how broadly the members opposite would like to describe or define their mandate, not a single, solitary Albertan suggested that their mandate extended to eliminating this Legislature, eliminating debate in this Legislature, eliminating the centuries-old parliamentary system of democracy within this Assembly. So I would again urge the members opposite to remember that as well.

Again, finally, I will say that on the matter of job creation, where I do know in my heart that we share a common cause, I wish them the best of luck, and I can let them know that we will not stop doing everything that we can to provide support and advice on the best means to job creation and doing so in a way where jobs are defined as a relationship where you get paid and that that pay itself is administered fairly and justly.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's been a pleasure to address the throne speech this afternoon. Thank you.

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

Seeing none . . .

Mr. McIver: You were supposed to adjourn debate.

Ms Notley: Was I?

Mr. McIver: Yeah, you were.
Can you do it on 29(2)(a)?

The Deputy Speaker: No. A member who has not spoken needs to stand up and adjourn debate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to 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: I'd 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 with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. As some members of this Chamber will remember, I rose last week to speak to this bill, and in those remarks I highlighted what many Albertans have been telling me, that this bill is a solution in search of a problem. This bill seeks to reduce the corporate tax rate by a third, from 12 per cent to 8 per cent. In doing so, it will reduce government revenue by \$4.5 billion over the course of the next four years, and it will gift that \$4.5 billion to large, profitable corporations.

Now, in the last election the UCP told Albertans that gifting \$4.5 billion to large corporations will create jobs, not just a few jobs but a lot of jobs. The key message was, of course, jobs, jobs, jobs. In fact, the UCP promised Albertans that this measure alone would create some 55,000 net new jobs. That is a lot of jobs. To the credit of the UCP and the now Premier, they were very effective in that political communication, and they were very effective in their message discipline. When reasonable and knowledgeable people raised questions, they brushed them aside. When economists questioned the utility of the corporate tax cut at the time, they ignored it. When the deficit hawks raised red flags, they said that the tax cuts would pay for themselves, and when teachers and nurses expressed concerns about cuts, they said: don't worry. To put it another way, whenever someone questioned this government over their quest to reduce corporate taxes, they ultimately responded with the same message: jobs, jobs, jobs.

3:50

Now, Madam Chair, as I said, their political strategy proved effective. Albertans want good paying jobs, and they want security for their families, but let's not forget the promise the UCP made to Albertans. The promise was not a large corporate tax cut. The promise was jobs. The corporate tax cut was a mechanism, a mechanism to create those jobs, or so they promised. According to the UCP if we could cut the corporate tax rate, investments would flood into the province, the boom times would return, and everyone would have a job, not just any job but a good-paying job, those mortgage-paying jobs that all Albertans depend on.

Now, as all the members of this House know well, elections are about promises, but governing is about delivery, and when you govern, the rubber hits the road. With the election in the rearview mirror it is incumbent on this government to actually answer some questions and come clean with Albertans. We all agree that more jobs are a good outcome. We all want more jobs for hard-working Albertans. What we disagree with is the mechanism. On this side of the House we disagree that the main issue facing our economy is the corporate tax rate, and we firmly disagree with the idea that cutting the corporate tax will create 55,000 new jobs. There's good reason to believe that the facts are on our side, that the evidence is on our side, and that Bill 3 won't deliver on the promise. We know it, economists know it, industry knows it, yet here we are debating Bill 3, a quintessential example of a solution in search of a problem and a solution that won't deliver on that promise.

Now, before I get into the evidence, I'd like to say a few words about the UCP's solution to the job challenges facing Alberta. It's not an original solution; in fact, it's the same solution you've heard from Conservatives for the last 40 years to every economic problem. No matter the problem, the solution is to cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do in tough economic times? The Conservative's solution: cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do to keep a strong economy growing? You cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do to spur innovation in the economy? You cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do to improve labour productivity? You cut the corporate tax rate. How do we encourage investment in

machinery, equipment, and human capital? You cut the corporate tax rate. I think you see the problem. No matter the problem, no matter how complex the issue, no matter the evidence, the solution is the same: cut the corporate tax rate. Corporate tax rates are a Conservative hammer, and in their view every economic problem has a nail.

Let's step back and look at the evidence. Let's actually consider what is going on in Alberta right now. If we look at what's going on in Alberta, it's quite evident that tax cuts aren't the solution to Alberta's economic challenge. As I've said previously in this House, Alberta is facing some real and substantial structural challenges in our economy, and most of these challenges are in our energy industry, the dominant driver of the economy.

What are the structural challenges facing our energy industry? First and foremost, it's takeaway capacity. We lack takeaway capacity. We need more pipelines, we need more market access, we need to get our product to market, and we need to get top dollar for our product. Right now in Alberta we are challenged. We've had to curtail the production in order to ease the differential. Storage utilization is still at record levels, and we've recently seen yet another delay in line 3 and more legal manoeuvring in the United States with Keystone XL. My point, Madam Chair, is that in this context cutting the corporate tax rate won't help drive investment in the energy sector. Companies won't make major new investments until the issue of takeaway capacity is resolved. Let's be clear. This is a problem that has been decades in the making.

On that note, Madam Chair, let me take a moment to acknowledge and thank the former Premier, the current Leader of the Official Opposition, for her steadfast commitment to addressing this specific problem. We know her tireless efforts were appreciated by Albertans, and we know that there was more work to do. But the former Premier picked up yards and brought the ball down the field. I know that her sophisticated approach helped put this issue squarely on the national radar. So while we've made progress, we still face real challenges when it comes to market access.

When I talk to folks in the energy industry, they tell me that lowering the corporate tax rate won't help stimulate investment. They say this because the corporate tax rate isn't the barrier to their investment. The main barrier, or the main hurdle, is being able to get their product to market. We have Bill 3, or what the UCP has labelled the job creation tax cut.

An Hon. Member: You can't even say it without laughing.

Ms Sweet: No.

But in our main industry, in the industry where we need to create the most jobs, industry is saying that the corporate tax cut won't lead to more investment and more jobs.

As I've said, we've got a solution here in Bill 3 that is in search of a problem. Let's be honest. Corporate leaders aren't asking for this tax cut. It's good for their shareholders. Their corporate leaders have been clear about what their short- and medium-term priorities are: increasing the dividends for shareholders, more stock buybacks, and deleveraging their balance sheets. Now, there's nothing wrong with these priorities. Our corporate leaders in the energy sector are responding to the market force. If Bill 3 becomes law, they will continue with their short- and medium-term priorities. They will continue with or perhaps accelerate their dividend increases and their share buyback programs, but Bill 3 won't lead to more investments. It won't lead to more jobs. It won't do these things because it won't address the number one structural issue facing our economy.

So what are the other structural issues facing our economy, in particular the energy sector? Let's spend a few minutes talking

about the regulatory regime. It's more complex, more time-consuming, and more capital intensive than ever before. We've got a new legal structure coming with Bill C-69 along with new standards. When new regulatory standards come in, it creates uncertainty. What is also clear is that when you get new standards that companies have to adhere to, the regulatory bar isn't always clear. The bar is often clarified through trial and error and through courts. This creates uncertainty for companies that are considering new investment. It creates reluctance among companies to be the first to test the new standards. Quite simply, there is no first mover advantage here.

Madam Chair, my comments here on the regulatory challenges facing our economy are not particularly insightful. This challenge has been a point of discussion and serious contemplation in Alberta for much of the past five years. My point is that this is one of the real issues facing our economy, again, not corporate tax rates. To listen to some of the rhetoric coming from the UCP during the election, the solution to this problem and to all problems facing the Alberta economy is to cut the corporate tax rate. Indeed that's the silver bullet according to the UCP. We were told that it's the solution to all of our problems, but I don't see it. Again, nobody in our energy industry is telling me that that's the main challenge in our economy. Nobody is saying that the corporate tax rate is the main reason why investment is down from the boom times. Instead we're talking about market access, we're talking about regulatory regime, and they're talking to me about rapidly changing technology along with changing demand from global capital markets.

Now, I haven't said much yet about the changing technology in the energy sector, nor have I said much about changing demands from the capital markets. Let's take a few minutes to discuss these factors. We have all witnessed a monumental shift in global energy markets. These changes have been driven by new technology and new demands from investors. Ten years ago we all thought we were approaching a world of energy scarcity. There just wasn't enough oil coming online. We saw what this meant for Alberta: tens of thousands of dollars in new investment in the oil sands, lots of new jobs, lots of prosperity, long-cycle projects, particularly in oil and gas, an energy price approach that surpassed \$100 a barrel, and investment flowed. We boomed. What was interesting in this era of energy scarcity was the behaviour of the capital market. They were concerned primarily about production. It was about volumes; it was about output. Companies would raise capital relatively easily for these projects, even in our cost structure in Alberta, which was competitively high. We had accessible reserves. Markets were willing to invest. Profitability was at that point a secondary concern, so companies could raise capital mostly exclusively based on their ability to bring product online.

Then the market changed. New technology came online. Global prices declined. Short-cycle plays became the flavour of decades. Production in these short-cycle plays, particularly south of the border, grew dramatically. Today we no longer find ourselves in a world of energy scarcity. In fact, today we are in an era of energy abundance. How did the capital market react? We read about it every day in the newspaper. We talk about it with our neighbours. For Alberta, production is no longer the primary objective. The goal is to lower the cost per barrel to increase free cash flow and to become profitable in the new lower priced environment. The capital markets aren't demanding more big, new investments that lead to local jobs and more activity in the patch. The capital markets are looking for increased dividends, more share buybacks, and better balance sheets.

So what does this mean for Alberta? Well, this means that our energy sector is facing challenges. On this side of the House we

appreciated that this monumental shift in the global energy sector is real. We appreciate that it has had a profound effect on our economy.

4:00

Now we're here to debate Bill 3 and not the policy response of the previous government that I was honoured to be a part of. But I will take a moment and say that our policy response had some real merit. As members we will recall that our approach was to invest and diversify within the energy sector. To be more specific, through royalty credits we aimed to position Alberta as a global leader in the petrochemical sector, and we were on our way. Thousands of jobs were created, for example with the Inter Pipeline project in the Industrial Heartland, which I am proud to represent. When fully rolled out, we projected the creation of 70,000 direct jobs through our petrochemical diversification strategy.

Now, obviously, our strategy and the one proposed by the UCP government were different. The UCP plan for jobs was Bill 3. It's nothing more and nothing less than a corporate tax cut: cut taxes, and let the chips fall where they will. There's no strategy here, just a single hammer to deal with every economic nail. The problem, of course, is that Bill 3 doesn't respond to any of the main economic challenges facing Alberta. It does not address our market access challenge, that I've discussed. It does not address the regulatory uncertainty our energy sector faces. It does nothing to position Alberta's energy sector for success in this new era of global energy abundance and rapidly changing technology. In fact, the UCP plan for jobs seems totally detached from the reality of what's going on in Alberta's economy.

I guess it's a solution to a problem somewhere in the world, but it's not our solution. As I've said, this bill is the definition of a solution in search of a problem. Now, let me say that Conservatives don't always offer corporate tax cuts as a solution. Back in 2008, when the global credit markets froze and the global recession cast its long shadow, our Prime Minister came up with a response. His response was Canada's economic action plan, and the Prime Minister was Stephen Harper.

Now, the Prime Minister, an economist, was faced with real challenges, but he didn't let Conservative dogma get in the way. He responded to the specific challenges facing the economy. He bailed out the auto industry, he invested in infrastructure, and he was honest with the public. His policy response to the financial crisis in Budget 2009 laid out some key truths. He laid out how ineffective corporate tax cuts could be to stimulate the economy and create jobs. According to Prime Minister Harper every dollar expended on corporate tax cuts would only grow the economy by 30 cents, but \$1 invested in infrastructure would grow the economy by \$1.60. So he invested in infrastructure, and he said no to corporate tax cuts.

My point, Madam Chair, is that smart leaders roll out policy that responds to and addresses real challenges. The solution to every economic issue is not to reduce the corporate tax rate. Putting it another way, context matters, or, to borrow an old cliché, context is king.

As I wrap up my remarks, I want to return to an earlier theme. The UCP promise to Alberta was jobs, good jobs. The UCP promise to Albertans was not a corporate tax cut. The corporate tax cut was the mechanism. What the people were voting for was jobs. Bill 3, the corporate tax plan, won't create jobs. It's not going to work. It won't work because it doesn't address the actual issue to job creation in this province. I've said this more than once. This bill is a solution in search of a problem.

What this bill will do is create a \$4.5 billion hole in our budget. That means cuts: cuts to classrooms, cuts to health care, and cuts for people who are out there working, who still won't have a job

because this bill won't deliver. It seems this government is determined – determined – to offer a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. Fair enough; they won the election. But if they're going to engage in this triumph of ideology over common sense, then they need to tell Albertans what's going to come next. What are they going to cut? Are they going to fire teachers? How about teachers' aides? Will school fees rise? How much will they cut from highway projects? What's the forecast increase in the number of potholes?

Let's get some answers to the question of cuts on the record. If the UCP is willing to go down the Bill 3 path notwithstanding all of the evidence that I've provided that we know it won't work, then Albertans deserve to know what they're going to cut; \$4.5 billion is a lot of money. That's a lot of teachers. That's a lot of school lunches. That's a lot of important capital projects like the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan.

So to the members opposite and to the ministers of the Crown, who have been honoured to serve Albertans with specific ministerial portfolios: what are you going to cut? How are you going to pay for this corporate tax cut? I think Albertans deserve to know, and I know I do.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise and partake in the debate on Bill 3 this week. I think this may be my first opportunity to engage in debate here in the Legislature this week. I've missed it a bit. It's good to be back.

We've had a fair amount of discussion around this bill. I certainly thank my colleague from Edmonton-Manning for the careful thought that she's given to this, I think, in bringing a variety of very strong sources to bear, including our former Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his own acknowledgement and recognition that indeed taking this kind of a radical step yields the lowest benefit of all the many ways that we could be looking at stimulating our economy. Indeed, as many of my colleagues have said, that is not a goal that we disagree with. Indeed, I think that's a goal that we're all in agreement with here in this Chamber. What we disagree with is the idea that the best way to create jobs in this province or to move us forward in the situation where we currently find ourselves is to pull 4 and a half billion dollars out of the budget for something that has been recognized to be the lowest yield for investment and for something which will show, according to the government themselves, absolutely no benefit to the province for at least two years.

As I talked about when I last had the opportunity to rise on this bill, Madam Chair, this bill is a gamble. This is the government rolling the dice with 4 and a half billion dollars on the table and hoping that they're going to hit it big. There is no evidence to show this has ever worked in any other jurisdiction in which it's been tried. There's nothing to demonstrate – in fact, this government has brought forward two individuals who support this, one of whom is currently sitting on their blue-ribbon panel. There has been some mild support in general from some other economists, including some that I respect, the gentleman Trevor Tombe, but even he has said that it is unlikely to yield the kind of result that the government has claimed it will yield.

Given the constant refrain we are hearing, given that this same Finance minister is now going and essentially lowering the boom on public-sector workers and telling them that they'd best back off in their requests for their duly contracted negotiations because we

are in such dire financial straits as a province that he feels the need to abrogate their rights, it seems to me that this is a poor time to be looking at taking even more dollars out of our budget to gamble on maybe seeing a benefit for the people of Alberta.

That's why, Madam Chair, I would like to bring forward an amendment. I'll have the originals and copies here delivered to you. I'll give you the opportunity to take a look at that before I continue.

The Chair: It will be known as amendment A2.

Please proceed, Member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm moving this amendment on behalf of my colleague the MLA for St. Albert. It reads that she moves that Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, be amended by adding the following after section 3:

Review by committee of the Legislative Assembly

4 Within 2 years after the coming into force of this Act, a committee of the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of the amendments made by this Act, including any resulting economic impacts, and must submit to the Assembly, within 6 months after beginning the review, a report that includes any recommendations or observations of the committee.

4:10

This language may be familiar to you, Madam Chair. I believe you and your colleagues moved very similar amendments in your time on this side of the House. In fact, you yourself may have made one or two. In this particular case, I think this is a very appropriate and prudent amendment and follows very much on the amendment which I introduced earlier, on which we had some robust debate and which was, unfortunately, defeated in this House. In that particular amendment, as the Leader of the Official Opposition noted earlier today, I proposed that we stop at 10 per cent instead of proceeding down to 8 per cent so that we would have the moment, some time to take and reflect and, indeed, for the government to demonstrate the value of this significant gamble that they wish to make with Albertans' tax dollars and with our tax system.

Well, that amendment was defeated, but I'm happy to have the chance to bring forward another amendment along the same lines, Madam Chair, because, indeed, as many have noted, this government is making a gamble. They are rolling the dice with 4 and a half billion dollars of government revenue. If they fail in this significant gamble, that cannot help but impact our public services. That cannot help but impact everyday Albertans. However, as I also discussed earlier in my remarks, this does seem to be for members of the government an article of faith given that they have no concrete evidence, given that there has never been a jurisdiction which has demonstrated that this is an effective strategy to grow the economy or create jobs. Therefore, for members of the government this is an article of faith, something that without proof, without evidence they nonetheless believe is indeed going to be true.

So here is their opportunity, Madam Chair, to demonstrate their commitment in that faith. Here is a chance to put that faith into practice, as it were. If this committee is struck in two years after this act, when we will indeed have the corporate tax cut of 8 per cent in place, at that point this government should be excited to have the opportunity to have a committee sit down and study the effects of this cut, of this risky gamble on behalf of Albertans and demonstrate, in fact, that I am incorrect in my assessment. They would have the opportunity to sit down and have a committee look at this and come back to Albertans and say: "Here. We have the evidence. We have the proof of our promise made, promise kept and the actual result that we predicted."

Madam Chair, this is the opportunity for this government to be truly transparent with Albertans. To use the colloquial: to put their money where their mouth is. It is one thing to stand in this House and make claims about the numbers of jobs that this will create, to make claims about the fact that this will eventually, at some future point which they have yet to fully identify, pay for itself, to indeed generate more income than is currently collected.

It is one thing to stand in this House and make that claim without evidence, without any other proof that they can point to that this has ever worked. It is another to be willing to step up and say: yes, in two years we will sit down and we will do the work and we will release a report which proves that this gamble we are taking, that this 4 and a half billion dollars that we are pulling out of the budget has been well spent, that it is indeed beginning – because, again, this government has themselves identified that we will not see any real benefit from this for at least two years. But at that point they should at least be able to demonstrate that we are seeing the beginning of a trend, that there is some specific indication that this particular direct action itself has incented some number of jobs or increased some amount of investment.

Indeed, Madam Chair, as we've discussed and as my colleagues have said and as I will continue to say in this House, there is no evidence that this has ever taken place as a result of such an action. Indeed, I myself and the folks that I speak with in the business community and the folks that are starting and maintaining businesses here in my constituency and, in particular, amongst many of the young businesspeople, who are doing very well in areas that others have struggled with, for example the restaurant and cafe business, for whom some claim that we must slash the wages of young people who work in those industries – we must indeed sit down and do what this amendment proposes, have a committee to study whether or not those who serve liquor should in fact be paid less for their work.

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that I know a number of young, progressive businesspeople who are running successful restaurants, bars, pubs, and other businesses in the hospitality industry who did not need to take those steps and do not intend to take those steps in order to run a viable business. Indeed, they are telling me that they do not need this corporate tax cut to continue to employ people. They will create jobs as demand increases. They create jobs because they have innovative and creative business ideas that attract people and cause them to want to patronize their business, and they are seeing success.

Now, I recognize, Madam Chair, that there is a difference, say, between the folks that are starting, you know, new pubs or breweries or other sorts of businesses within my constituency and the oil and gas industry, certainly. We recognize that there is a difference there. Certainly, there are differences of scale, and when we're talking about investment in the province, at times we are talking about investments of billions of dollars as opposed to local individuals and entrepreneurs. However, I would note that this government tends to try to frame these sorts of decisions around small-business people, so it's fair to discuss how it affects them.

But even on that larger scale, as we have discussed, Madam Chair, we have not seen that even larger corporations are investing more because we give them a corporate tax break. Indeed, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has noted, he has spoken with many CEOs who have told him that if they are given this tax cut, they will simply say: thank you. They will not reinvest that back into the economy. They have other places that that may go. In fact, that money may leave Alberta.

Indeed, we recognize that when the federal government did take steps to reduce the federal corporate tax rate, that did not end in a flurry of investment either in terms of capital or creating new jobs.

That ended with corporations sitting on large savings in their bank accounts, trapped capital that went nowhere. What drives jobs, Madam Chair, is demand. When people want more of a particular product or service, then existing companies will invest to expand what they're offering to meet that desired need, or others will spring up to fill it.

So I think it's reasonable that we take the opportunity in two years to sit down and have a look at this article of faith, this signature piece of legislation, on which this government campaigned and indeed is now loudly proclaiming is going to be redeeming the Alberta economy, that it be given a thorough examination and that this government be given the opportunity to prove their work and demonstrate to the people of Alberta the great value they have brought.

In two years, Madam Chair, I can guarantee that Albertans will already be aware of the effects that taking 4 and a half billion dollars out of the budget has had on them personally. They will be well aware of the size of the class that their children are in. They will be well aware that they have not seen progress in wait times at their emergency room. They, unfortunately, may be well aware that members of their family are still struggling to get access to mental health supports or indeed to accessible ground-level services if they are struggling with substance use. They will be well aware of the lack of opportunities for their parents to move into an appropriately staffed and quality seniors' facility.

4:20

Albertans will know, and they will be personally experiencing the results of many decisions of this government in two years, so I don't see how it could help but benefit this government to be able to also demonstrate in two years, then, that they have brought some value in taking away 4 and a half billion dollars that could go to address all of those issues on behalf of Albertans. Even this government themselves recognize that we do not simply have 4 and a half billion dollars just sitting around waiting to share, to just pull out and not invest in Albertans.

It makes sense to me that we would want to take the opportunity to bring together a committee of this Legislature, government members and opposition members, to have a chance perhaps to sit down and talk with some of these CEOs who are going to make these grand investments with the money they save, perhaps to call in some witnesses who can tell us how many extra jobs they created with the dollars that were handed back to them by government. We can have the opportunity to talk with the folks from the city of Calgary, and they can tell us how much of their downtown office real estate has been reactivated as a result of pulling 4 and a half billion dollars out of our budget. We would have the opportunity to sit down and do a proper economic impact assessment, which was a great favourite to be demanded by members of this government when they sat on this side of the aisle.

It's my hope that the government members would agree with this. I mean, there have been some troubling developments, from what I've heard, with some of the private members' legislation. They seem to be leaning in the direction of not wanting to take the time to conduct a review or to hear from folks who might be affected. I hope that's not going to be a general trend. It's my hope that we would instead see a level of thoughtfulness from this government. Indeed, I recognize, again, that they campaigned on this promise and that they want to keep that promise and they want to push it through. They have the numbers in this House to ensure that that happens. All we are asking and all we are wishing to do, Madam Chair, is, again, as yourself and many members that now sit opposite on the government side used to say, make a bad bill a little

better. Take the opportunity to provide the chance for you to prove us wrong.

In two years' time, for members of government to be able to take part in that committee, to be able to call in their witnesses and demonstrate to us – and I promise you, Madam Chair, that if this amendment is adopted and you give us that opportunity and that proof is shown, I will personally eat my words. I will recant everything I have said in this House, and I will praise this government for their success in bringing investment back to Alberta by blowing this 4 and a half billion dollar hole in the budget. This is an opportunity we are presenting to government members to, as I said, put their faith into action, to demonstrate to Albertans that they truly believe in what they are about to do and the challenges that Albertans over the next few years may face as a result, that they are truly doing this out of a belief that they are doing this for the benefit of Albertans. This is providing them the opportunity to produce an actual report which will lay that out and provide Albertans with the kind of transparency which, again, so many members of this government, when on this side of the aisle, demanded.

I'm happy to move this amendment, Madam Chair. It's available on the floor, and I look forward to hearing some robust debate.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak – and you won't be surprised – in favour of the amendment. I think this is a very good amendment. Obviously, I think this is a poor policy. I think it's headed in the wrong direction, but if, as my hon. colleague said, the members opposite are insistent on taking this on faith, I think we should test that faith. I'm a fan of science myself, so I think that bringing forward this amendment and allowing us to stop and reconsider this after two years to see if it actually has generated the things that they say it will generate is an incredible improvement to the bill. I would urge all members to vote in favour of it.

You know, I think that at the end of the day we don't all agree on much in this House, but I think we can agree on one thing, and that is that actions speak louder than words. The members across the way may say a lot of things about how they're in favour of the weakest among us, that they're in favour of creating greater social mobility, and that they're in favour of a whole bunch of things, but those things aren't borne out by their actions.

You know, what this bill does is that it creates a situation where essentially, especially when taken in combination with other bills that are before this House currently, it creates a transfer of wealth to the more wealthy. This bill cuts the corporate tax rate. What does that mean? It means greater profits to corporate shareholders. Now, many people out there are corporate shareholders, and that's fine. But I think the point here is that in a country like Canada, where we're meant to see greater social mobility, where we're meant to see individuals who can work hard and climb into an easier life for their children than maybe they had themselves, which I think is, at the end of the day, the dream that every one of us or our parents or their parents or whatever that came to this country had upon coming here – what this does is that it prevents that from happening.

What it does is that it says that those who have only their work to contribute, those who weren't born with money, who have nothing, who turned 18 and have not a dime to their name, who have nothing to give but their hard work: those people won't be paid for their overtime. They won't be paid for their holiday work. We'll let income inequality grow and grow and grow. Meanwhile those

individuals who already have, who may turn 18 and have a bunch of investment come down to them from their parents, will make greater returns. The people who are just working hard, the people who have nothing when they turn 18: they're going to be so stretched and so strained and so unable to get ahead by way of something like working extra hours that they're never going to get to that position. They're never going to be able to climb to that higher position and become one who is sharing in this great wealth giveaway that we're presently engaged in.

I think that's incredibly sad. I think the job of government should be to create an equal playing field. It should be able to create the same opportunities for everyone to be able to participate, to be able to become full members, to achieve their dreams, to buy houses and put their children in school if they so desire, and live the life of meaningful contribution that we all so desperately desire. I'll borrow a famous quote and say, you know: don't tell me what you value; show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value. In this case, this sends a really clear signal about what's valued and, more specifically, who's valued. That is to say, those who come in with money: those are the people that are being valued. Those who come in with their hard work and with their desire to advance themselves and their children: they're not being valued. I think that that's incredibly sad. I think it's one of the saddest things about this bill.

I would definitely be in favour of this amendment because I think that I'm absolutely willing to put my beliefs to the test. I'm absolutely willing to sit down in two years and look at this and say: what has happened? I don't believe that if you look back, historically, there is any correlation between corporate tax cuts and economic growth or the creation of jobs. I do believe that there is a link between policies like this, corporate tax cuts, and increased income inequality. I believe that that is the link that we're going to see. I believe that what we're going to see is that those who started without are having a more and more difficult climb climbing into a position where they're more comfortable whereas those who started with are having an easier and easier time continuing to be comfortable without perhaps working anywhere near as hard.

4:30

The problem with this, aside from its total failure to work – I'll just take some time to cite some statistics on that. Most recently I think it's worth looking south of us because this was identical rhetoric. It's basically Trump's rhetoric. The Premier basically borrowed Trump's playbook in the last election. Sorry. President Trump. We saw the U.S. cut their corporate tax rate from 35 per cent to 21 per cent, promising jobs, and 84 per cent of businesses have not changed their investment plan. I mean, that's pretty clear evidence that it's not working. Meanwhile the deficit in the U.S. is up by 17 per cent. I mean, there are an endless number of different situations I could cite, even sort of varying tax rates in the past here, but I think it's clear that this isn't going to have that impact.

It's interesting. When last I spoke to this bill, we were talking about this rhetoric that we see. We're seeing it here, as we do in many right-wing places: "Oh, no, the wool has been pulled over our eyes. It's all been a big magic show of smoke and mirrors. The budget isn't what we believed it to be." Never mind that the budget is prepared by professional public servants or that it's audited multiple times or that it pretty much is exactly what it appears to be, you know, we get this rhetoric. It's common rhetoric. I mean, it was almost expected, so much so that it almost wasn't a surprise when this government came forward with it.

I had assumed it was a signal for cuts, to be honest. That's usually what it is. Most right-wing governments who use this sort of "we've been lied to" propaganda: normally that's what they're about to say,

that we're going to cut this and we're going to cut that and we're going to cut the next thing. Then they sort of tell the population: oh, well, you have to take it because this is what we have to do in order to get our house in order. Never mind that those who are wealthy, that those who hold shares in those corporations that are generating large profits aren't being asked to give up. They're in fact getting more, significantly more. I think that's sad.

I'm not against people who come from an easier situation. I mean, certainly, my parents did a lot for me. They had money saved for me to take my first degree. They provided a house and food and stability and everything that most parents, I think, hope that they can provide for their children. I'm not suggesting that there's anything wrong with that sort of privilege. What I'm suggesting is that there are people who don't come from that sort of privilege, that there are people who don't come with that sort of thing, that there are people who hit the ground running at 18 with no college fund and with no property to their name, that those people deserve the same chance to succeed, and that we ought to give it to them.

I mean, I had expected cuts. I'm hopeful that that's not what we're going to see. I'm hopeful that we're going to see continued investments in education. I'm a little surprised that under enormous pressure from teachers, from students, from school boards, from parents, and from the opposition the government stood up over and over and over again and refused to commit to funding enrolment growth, and then one day they woke up and changed their mind. I mean, this is fantastic. If this is sober second thought, I'm all for it. I'm a little curious as to why the Education minister didn't know on Thursday and the Finance minister did know on Monday, but I'll let you work that out internally.

Where are we headed, then? You know, I think one of the promises that this new government made to Albertans, one of the things that they claimed they were running on was this idea that they would get the books back in balance one year faster. Instead of 2022-23 it was '21-22. I mean, to me, the idea of cutting hospitals and education for one year faster: like, obviously, I'm not in favour. But, obviously, a lot of people were in favour, so I wonder now, given that we're not going to see those cuts, whether this new signal is that, in fact, we're going to wind up balancing in exactly the same time frame.

I think that this amendment, that we'll review this in two years, is an incredibly good one because I don't think that we should take it on faith. I'm not suggesting there's anything wrong with faith; I'm just suggesting that faith has a place. In the world of social policy, in the world of creating economic policy in particular, in a world where we can measure and count, why would we take it on faith? Why would we take this "we give money away to the rich, and that will benefit everyone" rhetoric, which we've seen fail over and over again? We can come back, and we can do a review of it. I think I know what it'll show.

I think it's worth saying some of the reasons I feel this way. You know, one of the reasons I don't have faith in this failed economic policy of cutting taxes on the rich and assuming it'll trickle down is because it just doesn't jibe with most people's understanding of how business works. As my hon. colleague mentioned before me and I will mention now, businesses work on a supply-and-demand model. Giving a business additional revenue is not going to cause them to expand if there's no demand there. If there was demand there and it's a profitable business – and it was a profitable business because, again, we're talking only about businesses that are posting profits in excess of half a million dollars – then they would scale up to meet the demand because they're profitable. So scaling up would result in more profit. I think this idea that this is going to create jobs just doesn't sort of jibe with common sense in the right kind of way.

I think one of the things that's worth commenting on, because I think it's been a gross misrepresentation coming from the other side, is the idea that over here we hate business or that we hate people who are wealthy. That's absolutely not true. It absolutely isn't. When you say, "Hey, we should extend the same benefits to everyone; everyone should have an equal opportunity in society," it's not because you hate those who already have the benefit. It's because you think that everyone deserves the same opportunity. Yeah. I think that to try and flip it around and say, "Oh, well, if you feel like wealthy shareholders shouldn't be getting their profits, then you must hate them": no, I don't hate them. I just feel that maybe those who are working hard to try and provide for their family, those who weren't born with that wealth in their family: they too deserve an opportunity; they too deserve a chance to climb into a life that's little less challenging.

I always find it very interesting. As I went through law school – I went when I was a bit older, and I had had some lower paying jobs before I went to law school – you know, there were a lot of students in my class who had come from relative privilege, who had come from situations where their parents were also lawyers. That's fairly common. They had had the occasional summer job, usually working for their parents' friends' corporate something, so it was relatively well paid. It didn't require evening work. It usually was gotten through someone knowing someone else. This, again, isn't always the case. There were many incredibly hard-working students. But there was this certain class of people that was in this position. Really, the first job they would get for themselves would be their articling job. They would leave school, their parents having paid their way through, and make \$80,000 a year at their very first job. Many of these individuals that I talked to believed, like the members across the way believe, that their hard work entitled them to what they had.

4:40

I'm not saying that it wasn't hard work – I mean, I went there, too; it does require that you study long hours and invest a certain amount of yourself – but what I will tell you is this. I don't think it was particularly harder work than working 10 consecutive hours on my feet with no break, waiting tables. I don't think that it was particularly more stressful than working a low-wage job that put me in a position where every time I managed to put a little bit away, something would happen: the car would break down or there'd be some sort of extra additional costs. I'm not saying that that it isn't hard or that it isn't stressful. What I'm saying is that other people experience things that are hard and stressful and that they, too, should be permitted the opportunity to flourish.

You know, I remember when we were doing consultations, which we did excessively on a number of different bills, that there were often people who were very angry who had in the past been consulted by the government. They were still being consulted, but they were angry that in addition to just them, the government was listening to more people. The consultation circle was broader. More voices were permitted to come forward with their opinion, and as a result of this, these few who had previously been consulted were incredibly angry that it wasn't just their voice. What they were angry about was that they had a say, but other people who disagreed with them also had a say, and the government balanced those things.

I think it was very interesting to see, and I think that that's sort of what we're talking about here, a situation where – I'm not suggesting by any means that we should take from anyone. What I'm suggesting is that we should open up the circle and allow everyone to flourish. What I'm suggesting is that when we're creating economic policy, what we're talking about is: who's going to profit at whose expense? It's not a zero-sum game, obviously,

but ultimately these have real-world impacts on real-world people, and what I'm suggesting is that everyone should be able to benefit, not just a few. I guess maybe that was the idea that ultimately drove me into politics, that everybody should be able to benefit, not just a few.

That's what troubles me about this bill, and that's why I think we should go back and take a look at it. I think we should take a look at the economic impacts, and I think we should take a look at the impacts on sort of income inequality as well because I think it's sad when it becomes harder for those who are born without to be able to achieve the same as those who are born with. Again, there's nothing wrong with corporations. They are our job creators. They are contributors to our economy, to our life, to our world, to our communities. All I'm suggesting is that when we're doling out the money, we should consider whether we want to give all of it to those who already have and none of it to those who don't or maybe whether we should find some balance.

I think those are my comments with respect to this bill. Those are the reasons that I think we ought to consider sending this to committee, because I do think it's the wrong policy, but I think that if we insist on moving forward with a wrong-headed policy, which it appears that we're going to, that we ought to have a mechanism to review that and to see what the actual impacts are. At the end of the day, every person may be entitled to their own opinion, but they aren't entitled to their own set of facts. All we're suggesting here is that we ought to operate in the land of facts and we ought to come back and consider the facts.

With that, I will support the amendment and suggest that others do the same.

The Chair: Are there other speakers, comments, questions? The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to speak against the amendment and make a few broader comments, I think, around our job-creation tax cut.

I will assert that lowering corporate taxes will improve the competitiveness of our business environment. There's not an economist in the world, I believe, that won't argue that case. We may find that there will be differing degrees, but a competitive business environment, of which the existing tax regime plays a big part, does affect investment. I appreciated the Member for Edmonton-Manning pointing out that there are a number of challenges in Alberta, and we recognize that. We recognize that we have great market access challenges here in Alberta, particularly with our energy products and, I might also add, with canola and other agriculture products at this point in time. We have a regulatory environment that needs modernization. I certainly acknowledge and agree with that.

These factors and others such as implementing a carbon tax and increasing corporate taxes by 20 per cent did contribute, I believe, significantly to our declining economy and reduced competitiveness for business investment and reduced competitiveness of our business environment in the last four years. That's why, Madam Chair, our plan is bold, and our plan is multifaceted. It includes repealing the carbon tax, which, again, affected every Albertan and certainly every business in this province. It includes passing the open for business act, which is going to reduce burdens on job creators in this province and provide more opportunities, particularly for young workers in this province. It includes initiating a dedicated effort to modernize and improve the competitiveness of our regulatory environment. I think all members of this House agree that that's an essential and important initiative. Of course, it also includes a major effort to increase

market access, particularly for our energy products. I know that, again, every member in this House agrees that that's important. Our approach is multifaceted. Lowering corporate taxes is one important, critical piece of this initiative.

We know, Madam Chair, that capital is mobile, and we've seen that in this province. We've witnessed that at an incredible rate in the last four years. Capital is mobile, and businesses can pick up very quickly in this modern day and age, probably quicker now than they could 10 years ago and much quicker than they could 20 or 30 years ago. We compete for global capital, so a competitive business environment is absolutely critical moving forward. In fact, there are a number of studies from eminent economists who have demonstrated the correlation between a competitive business environment, including a competitive tax regime, and economic investment and economic growth.

Tax regimes have a significant impact on our business environment and economic development. Another advantage – and we've not spoken of this one – of a low corporate tax rate is that it encourages economic diversification at its purest form. Economic diversification is a goal, I think, again, of every member of this House. There are a variety of ways to seek to achieve that, and I would assert that creating the most competitive business environment is, at a baseline, the best way to encourage sustainable economic diversification.

The challenge with creating targeted tax credits to industries or maybe particular businesses and providing taxpayer subsidies, again, to particular industries or businesses to create diversification is not only that you end up picking winners and losers but so often that diversification that may result in the short term isn't sustainable in the long term. It's simply predicated on a very short-term incentive to a particular business or industry. Creating a broad-based, competitive business environment, in my opinion, is the best way to begin to diversify our economy. Again, it's the most sustainable way to do that.

4:50

We're confident that our job-creation tax cut will deliver economic growth, but it will also encourage businesses and industries of all stripes to come to Alberta, whether it's oil and gas and energy – of course, we depend on that significantly – manufacturing, retail, or the tech industry, which we believe has a great future here in this province with our educated, young, forward-looking, creative, innovative workforce and citizens of this province. We believe that the tech industry has a great future here. Again, we can create a competitive business environment, of which a competitive tax regime is a key part.

You know, our job-creation tax cut does not promote any one company or industry. It encourages agriculture and agriculture manufacturing as much as it does the energy industry. It encourages tech as much as it does the retail sector. It encourages every sector and, again, allows this province to play to its natural, competitive advantages, which, in the long term, prove to be the sustainable way of creating diversification.

Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the opposition for tabling a government of Canada budget report, I believe, the 2009 budget document, where they have quoted our previous Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. I would suggest that this document actually supports our assertion that lowering the corporate tax rate will in fact accomplish what we want it to. I quote:

Corporate income tax measures have limited impact on aggregate demand over the periods displayed in the table . . .

And I'll say that they're a short period of time.

. . . but have among the highest multiplier effects in the long run.

This is because they increase the incentive to invest and

accumulate capital, which leads to a higher permanent capacity to create goods and services.

Madam Chair, we are after a permanent, a long-term capacity increase in this province, not only for today but for future generations that depend on this government to get it right. We've never said that our actions are about short term. We are in this for the long haul, and we're working towards permanent, long-term economic growth that Albertans today and future generations can benefit from.

While we're looking at studies, Madam Chair, we have a 2012 study by Dahlby and Ferede that shows that lowering corporate income tax rates has significant positive impacts on investment and GDP. There's also a vast amount of research out there that demonstrates that increasing corporate tax rates can have disastrous impacts. Quite frankly, we've seen that in this province. When they governed, the members opposite increased corporate tax rates, among other measures. We witnessed this economy tank.

A recent paper from the OECD indicates that corporate tax increases are the most harmful type of tax measure for economic growth. Other literature such as a 2017 paper from the Calgary School of Public Policy shows that corporate tax increases implemented in Alberta – and I've just mentioned this – by the previous government would negatively impact labour productivity and result in overall decreased wages for Albertans, and we observed that.

Madam Chair, again, we're not implementing short-term solutions. We're working to repair the long-term damage that we've recently witnessed. The job-creation tax cut is a long-term plan that will create sustainable economic growth and employment, again, not just for the next couple of years but, even more importantly, for the long term and even for the decades to come. Future generations will benefit from these changes, just like Albertans will in the next two to three to four years.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members with comments, questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to see that the Finance minister has stood up and responded to some of my comments. I appreciate that he read my tabling, which was nice because most people don't read our tablings. So thank you for that.

I just have a couple of questions, and I'm wondering if the minister will be willing to respond, and if not, that's fine. Part of the conversation that we've been having in the House recently around the projected budget and where the budget will be is the discussion around the blue-ribbon panel. Now, I recognize that when the Premier introduced the blue-ribbon panel, he said that they're not allowed to talk about revenue; they're only allowed to talk about expenditures. Here's my question, and here's where my concern is. If we're looking at what cost efficiencies we can find within the government yet we're acknowledging that a corporate tax cut is going to put a \$4.5 billion deficit in the revenue, how can you as a government honestly be able to say that the budget overall makes sense? How can you not look at revenue and only look at expenditures and say that that's a fair budget? It doesn't make sense. There's always money coming in and money going out.

When we talk about this bill, Bill 3, I guess, to me, it feels a little premature, and it feels premature because although I recognize that you're saying that, well, this was a promise made and a promise kept and all the political rhetoric around that, the reality of it is that you're looking at deficits and you're looking at cost expenditures, and you're trying to say that we are going to introduce a budget without looking at revenue. How do you introduce a budget without

looking at revenue? Corporate taxation in this province is going to put a huge hole in your budget, and the only way you're going to be able to balance that budget is by cutting in other areas. I really struggle with that component of it.

I recognize that when you talk about the corporate tax system, making sure it doesn't create winners and losers around your industries – I guess my question would be this. You have a royalty review projection, that your Premier has spoken about potentially coming forward, to discuss royalty revenue and whether or not you're going to look at a royalty review and whether or not you're going to have some legislation around royalty reviews. If you're going to do that, then you're actually looking at how you're incentivizing different industries.

We did this with the petrochemical industry. The reason we did it was because we need to encourage them to come from the United States to Canada and start looking at the production rate. We've seen it generate jobs by doing that. We've invested in the tech industry through different options and incentives that have actually brought Google to Alberta, have looked at Amazon coming to Alberta. There are different ways that you could incentivize the industry without putting a \$4.5 billion deficit hole in your budget.

If you're going to do it – and we know you will; you're going to pass Bill 3 at some point because you're the government – how do you create a budget on it? How can you rationalize to Albertans that your blue-ribbon panel is going to give you the tools that you need to look at your costs and what you're investing in and what you're going to cut and not acknowledge that you have to look at this \$4.5 billion deficit and also acknowledge the fact that you're already saying that it's not going to do anything for two years? You're right. The table that I tabled said that over projections – it was a long-term projection, but so is this plan. This plan says the exact same thing: over two years you're not going to get the return on the corporate tax cut. It won't happen.

What you're doing is looking at how you're going to cut a whole bunch of different things without looking at your revenue. You have to replace the revenue. That's just the reality of it. The only way you replace revenue is by having investments coming back into the province. How are you going to fill a \$4.5 billion hole with revenue? What does it look like? If you acknowledge that the corporate tax rate will not bring investment into the province over two years and create the jobs that you're saying that it's going to – your personal taxation rate is not going to go up; you're not going to get a return on your corporate taxes because you're not going to have the industry investing right away – you are going to have a hole for two years. I mean, it's \$4.5 billion over four. I get that.

I'm pretty sure that the chair of your blue-ribbon panel would challenge that you have to look at the revenue. She did in Saskatchewan. I mean, over a period of time maybe their corporate tax went down, but over a period of time their corporate taxes went back up. She cut a lot of different things, and, specifically for many of you in this House, a lot of rural supports were cut under that budget. Although the blue-ribbon panel can be your argument for many, many, many things, if you're not looking at your revenue, you have a fundamental problem, and the only way you're going to be able to solve it is by cutting. Unless you can tell this House how you're going to create revenue over the two-year gap when you don't have investment coming into the province, I struggle with the whole argument and why it is you just can't wait until you see what the blue-ribbon panel comes back with and says: look, this is what the problem is; this is what we can cut. Because, ultimately, your blue-ribbon panel is not going to be able to find the gap in that \$4.5 billion to balance your budget. It's just not going to happen, unless you know something that I don't know.

5:00

The Chair: Just a reminder, members, that we are on amendment A2. There's been a bit of latitude all around the House on this one, but I just thought I'd mention that.

I believe that the hon. Minister of Finance is rising to speak.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to respond to a couple of the thoughtful questions that the Member for Edmonton-Manning raised. I think that relative to the blue-ribbon panel we were clear in the terms of reference that we asked them to do a deep dive into Alberta's finances and focus on the expenditure side. I think that it's no secret that Alberta's per capita spending is very, very high relative to other provincial per capita spending, so we really believed we needed to focus there.

Again, as we take a look at long-term sustainability, managing this province's finances, I think we absolutely have to be responsible on the spend side, and that can help avoid the challenges we see in budgets as revenues fluctuate significantly in this province. Of course, we did campaign; we made a promise to Albertans that there wouldn't be tax increases, and we take that promise seriously. We intend to honour that. We've heard a lot about the hole that will be blown in the revenue, \$4.5 billion, over the last several days. Again, we were clear with Albertans in our detailed platform in terms of the effect that this job-creation tax cut would have on corporate revenues. We were clear in the platform.

There will be benefit before the two-, three-, and four-year marks, however. I believe that in the way we're implementing this job-creation tax cut, by announcing it with certainty ahead of time, it will change investment decisions immediately. While that may not mean a significant surplus in corporate income tax revenue immediately, we believe that it will affect job creation quite quickly, and we know how important that is to all members of this House and, certainly, how important job creation is to Albertans. Dr. Bev Dahlby has also concluded that by 2023-24, I believe, without looking at the exact dates, in his opinion, this corporate tax cut will actually result in increased overall government revenues. Again, we're not playing the really short game here; we're playing the intermediate and longer game in terms of government revenues.

Again, this is a measure that is really focused on attracting investment, getting Albertans back to work, creating opportunities for small businesses, for those corner-store businesses out there, that benefit from a very competitive tax rate in this province already at 2 per cent but desperately need additional opportunity. This job-creation tax cut, moving our corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent, I believe will provide significant increased opportunity for the smallest of our businesses, hard-working entrepreneurs in this province, and it will also return much-needed jobs to the province of Alberta.

The Chair: Who was first? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Don't worry. We'll all get a chance to speak here, Member.

Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise today and speak to this amendment, which I do plan to support. Just quickly I want to touch on some of the conversation that has happened so far today. I have some concerns. The Finance minister said – and maybe this is more of a personal issue – that taking action to reduce corporate taxes is a bold measure, and I would argue that it's one of the least bold measures that you could actually do as a government. You know, taking taxpayers' dollars, taking the money of the people of this province without any kind of question about how it's going to be spent, if the money will stay in the province of Alberta, if it will

support the workers that you're trying to support – without any questions you're going to hand taxpayers' dollars to large corporations.

Now, another comment that was brought up – I apologize; I don't have the Blues in front of me – was along the lines that we need to stop subsidizing industry and offering them incentives that aren't sustainable. This was in regard to the tax credits. It sounds like the minister won't be supporting the tax credits that we had implemented over the last four years, which is of great concern to me. The minister must realize that while he's attacking the tax credits that we brought in, saying that we shouldn't be subsidizing industry if they're not sustainable, you are doing the exact same thing by cutting corporate taxes.

I'm supporting this amendment, once again, reviewing this legislation within two years, a comprehensive review, and making sure that the Assembly has the opportunity to review that report within six months of it being brought to the Assembly. I'm supporting that. I mean, right now I have many concerns that have not been addressed, concerns around: why is there no question around eligibility? How much of a corporation's workforce is in the province? What are they going to do with that money, for instance? These are questions that are addressed through programs like the Alberta investor tax credit. They're addressed through some of the other programs that we brought in, like the capital investment tax credit. There are strict criteria about how the money is spent and which corporations are able to get the money.

I do understand the concern about giving this money to specific industries, which is arguable, most definitely. There was a program or two where we did specify industries. Like, the interactive digital media tax credit was for a few industries. I suppose I understand the concern there. We were working to diversify the economy, of course, but also strengthening an industry that we have here in the province and that we have the opportunity to become leaders in the province. I think that there's room to support these tax credits.

When we talk about reviewing the results of cutting corporate taxes, as is proposed in Bill 3, I want to know, when we compare it to a tax credit program, if it's actually better. I think that's something that we should be able to discuss right now, and hopefully the government members will be able to provide some evidence that that is the case because I'm still not convinced.

I want to go back to a comment that the critic for economic development and trade, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, made. In 2015, when we ran in the election, we had a job-creation plan. When we were elected, we took it to businesses, and we took it to industry, and they said, "Look, this is not going to solve the issues that you think it will, so you should go back to the drawing board." And we did. We worked with those businesses and those chambers of commerce, and we came up with these plans for a tax credit. So I want to know, as I've stated, if you're going to keep these tax credits in place, and if not, why not? I mean, we worked with the chambers of commerce, and we worked with local businesses, and they recognized that there was a need for capital. Cutting corporate tax rates is not addressing the concerns that there is a need for capital in the province. We talk a lot about the importance of small businesses. Frankly, this isn't going to overall address the need for small businesses to get capital, address the need for small businesses to keep more of their money and employ more people.

One of the other questions that I have now, but I suppose we can get addressed if we pass this amendment to have this reviewed in two years, is: would it have been better for industry in the province and specifically small and medium-sized businesses if instead of doing a straight cut across the top corporate taxes for medium and large businesses, we'd actually reduced the small-business tax to

zero? Maybe that's something that you have planned for us in the future. I suppose we'll wait and see and decide from there. But that's an important question that I think needs to be addressed. Why did you decide to only take care of large corporations and not lower small-business tax rates further or, instead, you know, balancing the two? Those are a few of the questions that I have.

Of course, some larger questions. The minister mentioned the blue-ribbon panel doing a "deep dive." If you're only going to address one side of the budget, I would argue that that's not a very deep dive, maybe a medium dive, maybe even a shallow dive.

5:10

Eggen: Wading pool.

Mr. Carson: Wading pool. Yeah.

I think that there's a conversation that the people of Alberta deserve to have from their government and deserve to have from their policymakers, and your blue-ribbon panel is definitely not going to address those concerns.

Of course, it's the easy thing to do, to put together a panel. They'll come back and say: you know, we need to give more money to corporations, but definitely don't want to touch the tax structure of anything. Well, yeah, once again, that's not very bold, Mr. Chair. I don't think you needed a panel, that you paid however much money for, to tell you that. I think that any one of your members probably could have said that in this House without pay.

I suppose I will stop there. I imagine I have more comments to make to the main bill, Bill 3. I am, of course, once again, going to be supporting this amendment that's before us. I think it's reasonable. I think that any legislation that we're passing should be reviewed at a certain time, two years. Maybe we should even review it before then, but the amendment before us says two years, and I do support that move.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any others looking to speak to this matter? I believe I see the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I recognize that we're debating an amendment here, so I'll reassert my position that I'm in opposition to this amendment, but I would just like to respond to a couple of questions that the member opposite has raised. You know, he raised the issue of small-business taxes. Why were they not considered? In fact, they were considered. Fortunately, at this point in time we do have a very competitive small-business corporate tax rate, a tax rate of 2 per cent, and we believe that's sufficiently competitive to not discourage investment, productivity, growth, and success, and even profitability with small businesses here in this province. So it was considered. Again, I'm a true believer in the fact that as we create a more competitive business environment, reduce our corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent, in fact, the investment that will flow into this province will add significant opportunity for those small businesses and that they will be a large benefactor of this greater corporate tax reduction.

Again, the member opposite asserted that profits would be immediately, you know, withdrawn and perhaps kept in shareholders' pockets, that our tax reduction would create additional profitability within corporations and may be gone or lost to Albertans. Let me suggest this. As we get it right in terms of creating the most competitive business environment in this province, those profits will be reinvested in this province, and that is our goal. That's the goal that we're looking to achieve. The bold moves are not in simply appointing the blue-ribbon panel; the bold moves are basically ensuring that we have the most competitive

corporate tax rate and business environment in this country and one of the most in North America. Bold moves include repealing the carbon tax, which was the largest tax repeal, I believe, in the history of this province. The bold moves are taking a concerted effort at modernizing and improving our regulatory environment, ensuring we have a world-class regulatory environment so Alberta businesses can compete on the global scale.

Lastly, I just want to respond to the point about credits and incentives to encourage diversification. I will say this. There can be a place and a time for specific incentivization, but I believe that a much more comprehensive, a much more sustainable approach, an approach we should use every time is to create a broad-based competitive business environment so that governments aren't picking winners and losers, so that governments aren't trying to presuppose what the next big thing is. Quite frankly, Mr. Chair, governments so often don't get it right. We need to create a competitive business environment where creative, innovative, educated, forward-thinking Albertans can invest in this province with the next big thing, and I don't believe governments will have that next big thing figured out.

With that, I'll say again that I'm opposed to the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are any others looking to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South standing.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's really always my pleasure to get up and speak in this House and to speak to such important issues here. I do want to commend the Minister of Finance for getting up and speaking at such length to this amendment and to some of the questions that were posed to him. I mean, I think it's really interesting, though, some of the words he chose to use. Maybe I'll speak to what the minister said in regard to why I would support this amendment in such strong terms.

The minister spoke at length about how there will be benefits in the very short term. I just wish, Mr. Chair, that the Conservative platform had actually shown that. Very clearly, the platform itself actually didn't have those numbers. I know that the platform had to be revised, perhaps multiple times, under the cover of darkness. That's okay. I mean, sometimes you don't get the numbers right the first time. But really clearly, by itself this corporate tax cut does not introduce the revenues that the minister is speaking about in the short term or even necessarily in the long term.

The minister also spoke at quite a bit of length about the assertions that he was making, Mr. Chair, and how he asserted that corporate tax cuts would have these long-term benefits and whatnot. Then he spoke at length and asserted that this would create innovation, especially in industries like technology and other things like that.

As somebody who actually was educated in computing science and technology and mathematics, let me be very clear. The term "assertion" has a very specific definition. What an assertion is is something that is a base truth of your entire principle and philosophy and methodology and program and algorithm. The first thing we actually do in computing science and math and algorithms, Mr. Chair, is that when you do an assertion, you test that base truth. You test to ensure that your entire program will not fall apart, that it will not fail. If your assertion fails, then the entire system that you have built will also fail. It is a base truth that must be correct in every single case.

Of course, I know that the Minister of Finance is not educated in computing and in algorithms, and that's why I'm trying to enlighten him in this House as to how some of that works, how this actually works when you're dealing with the complex mathematics of it, Mr.

Chair. When we talk about that, it's really important that we understand that you must test that central, core truth.

Mr. Chair, this amendment does that. It takes us back to our basics and says that when we accept that we have an assertion, when we accept that we believe that this is true, when we have faith in what we say, we must then go on and test it and say: does this actually hold up? Does the thing that we stated will create all of these benefits actually hold up, that single thing? The members of the government and the members of the backbench can speak at length about how this will create all these great benefits. If they are correct, that is going to be wonderful. But what is most important is that we understand whether that base truth actually holds.

Otherwise, if that base truth is false, then the entire house of cards comes falling down, the entire benefits that the government has spoken about, the entirety of all the things they have spoken about: innovation, savings, revenues. Everything that they have based basically their platform on, Mr. Chair, the entire platform, the entire house of cards will actually fall apart if that base assertion that the minister was so nice to state many times is not true.

I think that's something that members of this House should be very interested in because members of the government very clearly believe that the assertion is true, and members of the opposition perhaps have a little bit more critical view and want to make sure it is. But if it's something that they truly do believe is true, they should have no fear at all, Mr. Chair. There should be no fear in testing that truth. There should be no fear in making sure that what they have stated is actually going to work.

5:20

This amendment does that. It strikes a committee that then goes on and reviews those economic impacts. It goes on and says: will what the minister said actually hold up? I think that's something that we can all aspire to because that's what we as legislators want to be doing in this Assembly. We want to be making sure that the legislation we create works. We want to make sure that the things we base our assumptions on, our assertions on work, Mr. Chair. We want to make sure our legislation does what it's intended to do, because if it doesn't, then we have to come back here and fix it. We have to come back here and change it.

Mr. Chair, I'm concerned that members of the government don't understand that. I'm concerned that they don't understand what happens when your base assumptions don't hold up. I won't say the whole saying here, but you know what happens when we assume. Really, that's what's happening here with the government. They're making assumptions that they are not willing to test. I don't know whether that's because they're ashamed or because they don't believe it actually will work. But, very clearly, one of the two must be true because they will not even begin to entertain the idea that we need to actually test what they say. They will not even begin to entertain the idea that a review of this bill might be a good idea.

Mr. Chair, to be very clear, I think the bill in its entirety is a bad bill, but I do think that we can make a bad bill better. I think that what we can do is say: okay; the government thinks it's a good bill; I think it's a bad bill. What we can do is that we can definitely say that in two years we will know. We will know because we will be able to test whether it's a good or a bad bill. If the government isn't willing to do that, maybe they're scared. Maybe in their heart of hearts they know that there is a little bit to be concerned about with a review here. Maybe they know that a review could show flaws in their bill.

That would be something that I would hope they would be willing to put up, because leaps of faith are not what this Assembly is paid to do, Mr. Chair. What this Assembly is paid to do is to make legislation that will work for Albertans and will help get Albertans

the best province that we could possibly live in. Really, if the government doesn't understand the importance of that, if the government doesn't understand the importance of making sure we have legislation that is continually reviewed, continually tested and they don't understand how important it is that we check that the assumptions we're using actually hold up, then that's something that all Albertans should be concerned about.

That's something that all Albertans should be concerned about because the government needs to understand how logic works, basically, Mr. Chair, because it is fundamental to logical reasoning and deduction and philosophy. It is fundamental to these ideas that when you start with base truths, they must actually hold up. They must actually work. If the government doesn't understand that fundamental piece, I know that there are many people in the departments and bureaucracy who definitely do, and perhaps they can reach out to some of their colleagues and ask for a more in-depth explanation of how logic works. But if the government refuses to understand or perhaps is wilfully ignorant of how logic works and wilfully ignorant of how these things that the minister wishes to assert operate, then I think it's something that we need to be concerned about.

That's why this amendment would be so important, why it is so important, Mr. Chair. It's an amendment that ensures that we actually go out and do the job that Albertans elected us to do. It ensures that we don't go too rashly on legislation. I wish we had accepted other amendments that perhaps would have slowed this down a bit, but I think this is actually something that all members could agree about. We don't need to slow it down, but what we do need to do is ensure that the legislation works.

I think that members of the government should be glad to have a review because if their base assumption holds and if their assertion holds, then what will happen is that they will be able to go into a committee and do a full economic impact assessment and review and say to Albertans: look at how great we are; we the Conservative government were able to create this much economic activity. Mr. Chair, if it's absolutely true, then the government should be excited for this amendment. They should actually be jumping up and down on division and trying to get this amendment passed.

If they won't and if they don't think it's a good idea, then Albertans are left wondering: why? Albertans are left wondering: why is the government afraid to test their own legislation? Why is the government afraid to review their own legislation? What is it about their legislation that has them sitting on their hands? What is it about their legislation that they're so worried about?

Mr. Chair, I think that, for me, I'm concerned about the impact this will have. I'm concerned that it will blow a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in corporate giveaways while doing nothing to help actual workers here in this province. That's something that is very concerning to me. Unless the government is willing to speak about why they think that they never need to review any of their legislation and, in fact, that their legislation is always perfect the first time, then I think that we do need to pass this amendment. I think it's something that we do need to consider to be very important.

Mr. Chair, it becomes very clear that the government isn't willing to do that work. They aren't willing to do the work of understanding how good legislation is made. They aren't willing to do the good work of understanding how good legislation is maintained. They aren't willing to do any of that work, and I think that's something that's very concerning.

I think it's something that members of the government backbench should be very concerned about because they were sent here to also review government legislation, just as we in the opposition were. I think it's something that members on the front bench should be

concerned about. If their own ministers that they've sent up to put legislation forward aren't willing to take criticism on their bill, that's something perhaps they need to discuss among themselves. It's something where I think Albertans expect better. Albertans expect a government which is willing to take a good look in the mirror and say, "Does this legislation work, and do the things that we assume about our legislation hold true?" or, as the minister would say, assert.

Mr. Chair, that is something that I think is very important because when we talk about the types of things this legislation will do, when we talk about how drastic and risky and ideological this bill is, it is something that is very important we get right. It's something that's very important we monitor. It's something that's very important we review periodically because when you blow a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in your budget in corporate tax giveaways, it really does make a difference.

It means that you're going to push back that balance date. It means you're not going to be investing in your schools. It means you're not going to be investing in your hospitals. Because those are the things we need to keep an eye on, this amendment is important. We need to be reviewing whether this 4 and a half billion dollar hole, whether this giant giveaway to corporate friends and donors, Mr. Chair, will end up hurting our fiscal targets, will end up hurting our public services, will end up hurting our hospitals, no matter where they are in the province.

Mr. Chair, those are all very important things. It's very important that we get this right. It's very important that members on the front bench and, in fact, the backbench understand the logical fallacy they're trying to present here. They don't want to test their own bill, they don't want to test their assertions, and that's something that is very concerning.

I understand that the government thinks that they have it all figured out. But, Mr. Chair, we were in government over here for four years, and let me tell you that you never have it all figured out on the first try. I'm sure members of the government will agree with us. What happened was that you went back and reviewed things, you went back and you changed things. In fact, some bills came back to this Chamber two, three, or more times. That's the reality of governance, and the reality is that we need to make sure we get this right.

The campaign is over, Mr. Chair. What we are doing today is making sure that this legislation is good, and this amendment is a good amendment. I think there must be members of the backbench and, hopefully, the front bench that recognize how reviewing what you're doing periodically is a good thing.

Again, in computing science, Mr. Chair, one of the methodologies that is now very common is what we call being agile. Being agile is one of those things that you want to do because as a project moves forward, you want to be able to make changes. You want to be able to say, "Well, the requirements have changed" or "The expected results have not been working the way we thought," so you make changes to your project, you be agile and you make those changes on the go. That's what a review like this would allow us to do.

The government clearly doesn't want to be agile. The government wants to be set in their ways, and I think that's something that's very concerning. They want to be very slow, and perhaps that's something that the government is used to over there. But I think Albertans expect us to be nimble. Albertans expect us to make legislation that works, and if it doesn't work, they expect us to fix it, Mr. Chair.

Unless we can do a review and see what the economic impact is and see how this bill is affecting Albertans and affecting workers and job creators, Mr. Chair, we won't know. There will be no way

to do that work that Albertans expect us to do. In fact, we will probably be letting Albertans down. I think that is something that we should all be concerned about, especially members of the government. I think they should be concerned that they aren't willing to put in that work.

I don't know whether they don't want to bother having committees – they think that committees are unimportant – or perhaps they think that the committee will take too much time out of their day, Mr. Chair. Maybe they just don't want to come up to Edmonton to do those reviews.

5:30

Mr. Chair, I am proud to stand here and fight for those Albertans that expect us to do our jobs. I'm proud to stand here and fight for those people that expect us to go and review legislation and critique legislation. I'm proud to do all of those things. If the government backbenchers think that that job is unimportant, then that's their prerogative, but I think it's very clear that Albertans will be expecting us to do that job. Albertans will be expecting us to go forward and to do that work and to guarantee that the government continues to update the legislation and continues to have legislation that is nimble.

Now, Mr. Chair, I think it's pretty clear that I believe this amendment is important. I believe this amendment is important, and I think it's pretty clear that members of the government, based on how little they've spoken to the amendment – I know they've spoken at this amendment regarding other things – think that it's something that may be a waste of their time. Perhaps backbenchers here who are texting away or listening with earphones in think that this is a waste of their time as well.

But, Mr. Chair, it is very important that Albertans get the best legislation, it is very important that we review legislation to the best of our ability, and it is very important that we don't rush through this process. It's very important that we don't go too briskly and blow a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway to wealthy corporations and then leave Albertans by the wayside. That is something that would be very bad. That is something that I think Albertans would not like. That's something that I think my constituents would not like.

I think it's very important that we get this right. I think it's very important that we continue to challenge the narrative, and I think it's very important that we continue to challenge our assumptions because that is something that we understand as people who understand science and believe in science. I know that all of the members of this Assembly believe in science and understand science. We as people who believe this always challenge our base assumptions. We always challenge what we're doing because if you don't, it makes you a bad thinker, Mr. Chair. It makes you somebody who then suddenly becomes surrounded by sycophants, and that's certainly not what any member of this Assembly wants, I hope. It's something that I would be very concerned about, if members wanted it in this Chamber.

Instead, we need to make sure we continue to push forward and challenge what we believe to be true and review what we believe to be true because things change, as we know, and this is one of the best opportunities to do this review because this is actually allowing us to see if we are having the impact in Albertans' lives that we wanted, if we are having the impact in workers' lives that we wanted, and if we're creating the jobs and the economic impact that we wanted.

This amendment, Mr. Chair, is the best way for the government members to go out and speak at length in a couple of years' time of how great they've done if it does work. Of course, I've mentioned already that I don't believe it's going to have those impacts. I

personally don't believe that it's going to work to the extent the minister and the government believe, but this would be their opportunity to prove me wrong. This is the government's opportunity to make me eat my own words, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has already mentioned. This is the opportunity for the government to go out and put me in my place. I'm sure there are many members of the government who would long for an opportunity to do that.

Mr. Chair, if they don't want to go forward with this amendment for whatever reason – and I'm not sure if it's shame or embarrassment or perhaps just a worry in the back of their minds that they may actually be wrong and they don't want to admit it. That's something that I think is very concerning because we as legislators should be happy to admit that sometimes we are wrong. We don't get it right every single time, but what we want to do is that we want to move forward and we want to push forward to make Alberta better. The way to do that is to go and look at what we've done in the past and see what succeeds and what doesn't succeed and see where we've made mistakes and see where we haven't.

Mr. Chair, by reviewing all of those things, we come out as better legislators, we come out with better legislation, and we come out with a better Alberta for all of our constituents. That's something that I think every single member of this House aspires to. Every single member of this House wants to have a better Alberta, and we do that by making sure our legislation holds up to the standards that we set for it. That's something that I want to encourage all members to support. I want all members to strongly and proudly support the legislation they put forward and they vote for.

But if they're not willing even to look at their legislation and say, "Did it work?" then what can we expect of our government? What can we expect if they're not even willing to look and ask the simple question: is what we're doing working? That is a very simple question, Mr. Chair. It's something that all Albertans will be asking, and they will continue to ask every single election: did the government's policies work? That's something I think this House should continue to ask every single time legislation is brought forward here.

Mr. Chair, I strongly support this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A2? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much to all my hon. colleagues who have been part of the debate on Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, and specifically the amendment that we're currently discussing, introduced by my hon. colleague our MLA for Edmonton-City Centre.

I think it's really important that we reflect on what this amendment says because it is not binding the government to action. It is not hindering them in any way from moving forward with their platform-stated goals. In fact, it allows the government to continue to move forward with the knowledge that within two years they will begin a review of the amendments made by this act, taking a look at economic impacts, which I know for a fact are highly important to all members in this Assembly, particularly the government caucus members who were in this Chamber in the 29th Legislature, because measuring economic impacts was a topic of frequent discussion during that 29th Legislature in each and every session, and submitting said report to the Assembly within six months.

Because we are dealing with something that is incredibly important and valuable, our Alberta economy, the services we are able to fund and provide to our citizens, and we are looking at

making some changes that – as we have heard from the Minister of Finance, from members opposite, there are many different opinions about the impact and the results once these changes go into effect. We've actually heard that there are different economists who measure these impacts differently. I appreciate that the government is putting their best foot forward and is stating as fact that 55,000 jobs will be created, is stating as fact what this will do to our competitiveness, what this will do to attracting investment, but the government does not know these things as fact and has admitted as much and has acknowledged that there are differing models and differing opinions as we move forward.

This amendment, very reasonably proposed by my colleague, simply says:

Within 2 years ... begin a comprehensive review ...

We're not even giving a deadline for when it must be submitted, just started, please.

... including any resulting economic impacts ...

and then submit it to the Assembly

... within 6 months after beginning the review.

I guess there is a bit of a deadline on the other end, but it gives a great window of time for that review to take place.

Likely, a review and an impact assessment such as this can be done using a lot of the data that the government already uses to measure the performance of our Alberta economy, but we could add into that some very specific flavour as to what this bill is attempting to achieve and then measure if we are moving along in that direction. How many new businesses have been incentivized to move to Alberta as a result of this? The members in this Chamber have referred to some of the work done by our chambers of commerce, which often involves surveys. Perhaps survey data can be incorporated into this to give us a better sense of the impact of Bill 3 once it is put in place.

Mr. Chair, I support this amendment solely because we know there's such differing opinion, and we've heard in this Chamber a number of examples where the intended effect of decreasing corporate tax rates has not produced new jobs, has not produced new investment but instead has created large-scale deficits and cuts to public services. That's a pretty big risk. Being able to just keep an eye on what is happening and make sure that there's some sort of assessment or report back to the Assembly at large is not, in my mind, a very onerous requirement on this government. It allows them to continue and proceed down the path that not only did they put forward in front of Albertans during the election but they stand in defence of today and gives us that opportunity to review as an Assembly at that two-year mark.

Earlier we had an amendment, amendment A1, that would have essentially paused at that 10 per cent corporate income tax rate.

5:40

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order Items Previously Decided

Mr. McIver: The hon. member has decided to reflect upon an earlier decision of the Assembly, which is specifically not allowed in the standing orders. We're happy to hear all of her debate on this amendment. I don't think we need to relive the earlier amendment.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. If I may continue.

The Deputy Chair: Yeah. With regard to this situation I actually agree with the hon. Minister of Transportation on this point. Going forward, I'm happy to listen to the rest of your debate, clearing away from those issues.

Debate Continued

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With amendment A2, making sure that the Assembly is reviewing, through the form of a report, after the implementation of Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut act, has already begun, I think is incredibly important.

As I was saying, members within this Chamber have already talked about other jurisdictions where financial measures such as this have been attempted and have been – I would characterize them as failures. We've heard a number of times about what has happened specifically in Kansas, a state in the United States that has quite a few parallels between it and Alberta as far as how their economy is structured, oil and gas investment and whatnot. We know that the Kansas experiment, as it's been termed, predicted job creation, predicted economic growth, predicted higher revenues, painted a very rosy picture for all of the things that would come as effects from a corporate tax decrease, but what they actually received was slower growth, a revenue drop that led to a shortage of funding for public services. Education became underfunded. Making sure that there was aid to help the poor wasn't sufficiently funded. In the end, the economy was damaged.

There's a reason why this story as well as several other cross-jurisdictional reviews have been raised in this Chamber. It's because we are concerned about this happening in Alberta. By accepting this amendment, we know that within two years after coming into force, being able to review the impacts and what is actually being seen – of course, this is being called a job-creation tax cut, but we know that when it comes to job creation, cutting corporate taxes as a measure is considered one of the weakest options. We know that from a number of different reviews of previous examples of corporate tax cuts as well as the analysis therein.

In fact, many believe that spending on infrastructure has one of the biggest impacts when it comes to job creation. In fact, that was something that our government undertook to do, historic infrastructure spending: building schools, roads, hospitals, much needed across the province. That helped to support many, many Albertans and kept them working during a downturn in the economy.

Finance data also shows that spending on income supports for the unemployed and low-income Canadians: also a very good return on the dollars invested. Mr. Chair, I'm a really big proponent of building an economy from the bottom up because we know that when you give a little bit more money to the lowest earning, they spend that, and they spend that almost exclusively in the local economy whereas more money to the richest, to the top 1 per cent or even 10 per cent, often that money is invested or spent in other jurisdictions, in vacations, in a number of different ways.

If you raise minimum wage, for example, the people earning the least will take that additional money to buy healthier food, to get school supplies for their families, to go out to the movies in the local community, which helps boost the local economy. Every time someone spends a dollar in Alberta, that's going to Alberta businesses, which hire other Albertans who then spend their money, a really nice trickle-down effect. In that case trickle-up perhaps, where you're boosting the economy from the bottom up.

Here we have a plan which is predicated on the idea that if we give very profitable corporations a large tax cut, they will automatically turn around and invest that into Alberta, and when challenged on that, the Minister of Finance has not been able to say that that will for sure happen, other than that they're trying to set the conditions for that to happen. I understand that. But given that you cannot guarantee that that will happen and given, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said in one of his

responses to this bill, the importance of tying conditions to these types of incentive programs – as the Member for Edmonton-Manning talked about, the petrochemical diversification program, as an example, or some of the tax credit systems that have been implemented more recently to facilitate tech job creation – these types of measures can be more directly tied to the outcomes that we are looking for when it comes to job creation.

So I do support the amendment and making sure that this gets reviewed after several years.

The other jurisdiction that has been referenced a number of times in this Chamber is the one still happening under American President Trump, when they cut their corporate tax rates from 35 per cent down to 21 per cent. One of the interesting things there is that we already have several years of data showing that although the argument under which this tax cut was introduced, very similar to the one here in Alberta, sounded compelling, the analysis throws cold water on the idea.

What companies are actually doing with the additional funds are things like stock buybacks, things that allow them to amass more capital without necessarily creating new jobs. And this is not theoretical. Payroll data has been used to analyze the corporate tax cuts that were supposed to create jobs in the United States. The payroll data for publicly held U.S. corporations and an analysis of that shows that, generally speaking, this isn't what's happening, job creation. What's happening is that the rich are getting richer. That doesn't help to grow the U.S. economy, and something similar happening in Alberta wouldn't help us here as well.

Making sure that through this amendment we have a procedure in place, that we have a plan to review the economic impacts to make sure that there aren't any other surprises – because, of course, in the midst of doing this, other economic factors impact our province on a constant basis. Everything from access to tidewater with our pipelines to what's happening internationally with the global price of oil, all of these things are changing, shifting, so being able to come in and have checks and balances and to check in at the two-year mark to me seems eminently reasonable, particularly given the number of concerns that we've heard here in this Chamber as we've gone through the debate on Bill 3.

For these reasons, I will be supporting the amendment and would look forward to hearing more from the government members as to why even the act of writing a report and reviewing the economic impacts is something that is not supported. This is a reasonable amendment. I thank my colleague for bringing it in. I think significant concerns have been raised around Bill 3 and its impact on our economy, significant examples of where similar changes have been done, and they have not successfully brought in the prosperity that we are being promised exist here. This amendment gives us a reasonable step forward.

I want to say thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak on my support to this amendment.

5:50

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

I believe I saw the hon. Minister of Transportation standing.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm grateful for this opportunity to rise on amendment A2. I've been listening to some of the debate from my esteemed hon. colleagues, and I have a few comments, I suppose, to make. Now, I think what we just heard here is a request from the opposition to have guaranteed results. I did; I heard that. I say that there's no proof this is going to happen. You can't be sure. They're looking for guaranteed results, and I would suggest, I hope gently, that such guarantees don't exist in this world. Predicting the future is a mug's game, as they say. I've said it here

before, and I'll repeat it now. If I could predict the future, I would be a lot wealthier than I am today, and I think that truth could be said by all of us if we knew what was going to happen before it happened.

But here's what I do know. As a comparison or as a foil, I suppose, to what Bill 3 is – and I heard some talk about assertions. Well, there were some assertions made about four years ago that if we added the largest tax increase in the history of Alberta in the form of a carbon tax and if we raised the minimum wage by an unprecedented 30 to 40 per cent in a short period of time and if we added regulations and if we paid no attention to how much revenue was coming in and just spend on everything that we thought was a good idea to the point where we ran up a deficit of \$6 billion or \$8 billion or \$10 billion a year, literally, not figuratively but literally, and if we changed the way that we do things, from a reasonable level of debt with a plan to pay it back to the point where we got up to \$60 billion in debt for Albertans in one term of office and projected getting up to \$100 billion in debt in the second term of office, and, of course, with interest payments of about \$2 billion after one term of office and projected interest payments on the debt of \$4 billion after the second term of office, that everything would be great. Those were some past assertions.

Of course, Mr. Chair, it didn't work. There's now about in the neighbourhood of 180,000 Albertans out of work. There's record unemployment among young people. Investment has fled, and the rich corporations that the NDP like to complain about – they like to call them rich corporations, when, in fact, many corporations are rich and many corporations are not rich. I'll tell you what corporations did en masse. The large ones left. Corporations like Total Energy and Murphy Oil and a whole cadre of other oil and gas companies left. You know what they took with them? Their jobs, mortgage-paying jobs, that Albertans used to have and hold and could support themselves and their families with.

The hospitality industry, that paid a big part of the incredibly fast increase in the minimum wage, weren't able to employ as many people, and now instead of making \$15 an hour, a lot of those people, whether they're young people or seniors or other people, are making zero dollars an hour because the jobs that they used to have at \$12 or \$13 an hour no longer exist.

I guess I would agree with the hon. member that making incorrect assertions is a risk. We've seen an example of a whole suite of incorrect assertions by the last government that didn't work. Mr. Chair, we are actually making some different assertions that we think will bring different results. If the hon. member is looking for a guarantee, I don't suppose that a guarantee could be offered to the hon. member, but I think it's not a bad strategy to do the opposite of what failed in order to attempt to succeed. I think that's an assertion that we're making here, and Bill 3 is a part of that assertion.

Now, Mr. Chair, I notice it's 5 to 6, so I am going to, with your permission, make a suggestion that we rise and report progress at this point, and I would like to test the will of the House on that motion.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I believe I see the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock standing to report.

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

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed, say no. Agreed.
The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since it's 3 minutes to 6 and we had some very good debate today and I genuinely don't feel like

we can get any more meaningful debate done before 6 o'clock, I move that we consider it 6 o'clock and recess the House until 7:30 this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Just to confirm, your intention is to adjourn the Assembly until 7:30?

Mr. McIver: Thank you for correcting me. I move that we adjourn the House till 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875