

Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 13, 2019

Day 13

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature First Session

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings **Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Gotfried Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard Eggen Getson Glasgo Irwin Jones Nielsen

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. van Dijken Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring Allard Barnes Bilous Dach Dang Gray Horner Issik Jones Reid Rowswell Stephan Toor

Standing Committee on

Members' Public Bills

Chair: Mr. Ellis

Gotfried

Horner

Neudorf

Nielsen

Pancholi

Nixon, Jeremy

Sigurdson, L.

Sigurdson, R.J.

Irwin

Private Bills and Private

Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goodridge Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson Amery Carson Ganley Glasgo Guthrie Irwin Long Neudorf Nixon, Jeremy Pancholi Rutherford Walker Yao

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow Carson Deol Ganley Horner Issik Jones Loyola Neudorf Rehn Reid Renaud Turton Yao

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Ellis Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk Dang Deol Goehring Goodridge Gotfried Long Sweet Williams

Standing Committee on

Chair: Mr. Hanson Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk Feehan Getson Loyola Rehn Rosin Sabir Schmidt Sigurdson, R.J. Singh Smith Turton Yaseen

Resource Stewardship

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 13, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: The prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us today in the galleries: from the constituency of Camrose, let us welcome the Holden elementary school and, from the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the Strathcona Christian academy. Please feel free to welcome our students.

Those seated in the gallery, I invite you to rise when you hear your name or a reasonable facsimile of your name. Hon. members, if you'll keep your applause till the end as we do have a number of guests with us. Guests of the Member for Calgary-Klein: Mr. Kishore Kumar, Mr. Nash Kooner, Mr. Garry Bhandal. Guest of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge: Mr. Kal Toor. Guests of the Member for Edmonton-West Henday: Alice Nycholat and Nancy Steward. Guests of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods: Gil McGowan, Siobhán Vipond, Heather Smith, Brad Readman, Mike Parker, Greg Jeffery, Guy Smith, Rory Gill, Jolene Armstrong, Karen Weiers, Brendan Bruce, Jerry Toews, Guy Desforges, Joy Correia, Susan Slade, Brendan Van Alstine, and Bonnie Gostola.

Members, please welcome them to the Assembly today.

Members' Statements

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

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When door-knocking in my constituency, I talk to many seniors who required family, friends, and sometimes a stranger to assist them with their day to day, whether that be shovelling the walk, repairs around the house, their finances, or even, in some cases, help with preparing her will. This requires significant trust on behalf of our seniors. That is why it is so devastating to hear of the many cases of elder abuse in Alberta.

On Saturday, June 15, people all over our province will lift their voices against elder abuse as we recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. We must speak openly and honestly about the terrible reality that many of our seniors face. We do so to reduce the stigma and to let people in our communities who are affected know that they are not alone and that there is help available.

On Friday my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Housing will recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day here in Edmonton. It will be an important moment to help us continue raising awareness about how we are all affected when older people are mistreated. Our government will continue working with our civil society partners to prevent and end abuse. On Saturday please join me, Albertans, Canadians, and the entire world in raising the visibility of this issue. I encourage all of you proudly to wear purple, the colour of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and stand against elder abuse. Let us work together to end elder abuse and do our best for the safety and well-being of Alberta seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Public Service Front-line Workers

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of workers. I stand in support of every teacher that stays after the bell to go help a student with their math homework. I stand in support of every nurse that spends some extra time at the bedside of an elderly patient who's just looking for someone to talk to or show that they care. I stand in support of every emergency responder who puts themselves in harm's way to keep us safe. I stand in support of the caseworkers, the counsellors, the firefighters, the paramedics, the front lines, the working-class heroes. You name it, I stand in support of them all.

What I do not stand in support of is a government that would vilify these dedicated individuals. I do not stand in support of a government who would break the law and rip up contracts that protect workers' rights, Albertans who work very hard every day to feed their families. I do not stand in support of picking the pockets of Alberta families to pay for a \$4.5 billion tax giveaway that will do nothing to put dinner on the table in homes across Alberta.

I urge the government members in their caucus – many of them, I think, secretly worry about the state of their schools and hospitals in their constituencies when this Premier and this Finance minister are through – to think long and hard about who they stand in support of.

We know where we stand, and we stand on this side of the House with the workers of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Farmers

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise in this Assembly and celebrate the compelling history of Alberta farmers. In 1951 the government of Alberta recognized the importance of setting aside every second Friday in June to honour farmers from across Alberta.

I am proud to be one of those farmers. Rural Alberta has been home for me for my entire life, and I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to raise my family on the farm and among the rural community.

Communities and businesses from across Alberta thank local farmers for their contributions to our province. Simply put, farmers feed the world, and the fruits of their labour serve to nourish our souls. Unsurprisingly, Alberta farmers demonstrate distinction in their profession and have repeatedly proven themselves to be models of agricultural efficiency. Alberta farmers are not only innovators; we are also shrewd and rational businesspeople who have contributed to the Alberta economy just as expertly as to the crops and the livestock we tend. There is something very special about producing safe, nutritious, and sustainable food. As farmers we are the proud caretakers of our land and livestock.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is Alberta's second-largest industry but is by far the largest renewable industry we have and the backbone of our economy. We understand that 20, 50, 100 years from now the world will still need Alberta farmers to feed them, likely more so than ever before. As such, we implement the most sustainable farming practices possible to ensure a strong and healthy future for all Albertans for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless all of our farmers this growing season. If you ate today, remember to thank a farmer.

Rural Health Services

Mr. Loewen: Throughout my constituency and northwestern Alberta in general the accessibility of health services continues to be a pressing concern. Residents in rural Alberta understand that rural health care does not fit a one-size-fits-all model. Of course, we know that there are unique challenges we face delivering health services to rural and remote populations. We face issues such as longer wait times to make appointments and wait longer for ambulance services at times. Rural Albertans are often forced to subsidize the cost of their care by travelling long distances to services centralized far away from home. Some of these are the unavoidable result of geography and sparser population.

But I believe that innovative solutions exist and that this government is committed to finding them. Rural health care requires different solutions than in larger, urban settings. In the rural north we require the ability to make local decisions to improve the delivery of our services. We require flexibility to attract skilled professionals and incentivize them to come to our smaller towns.

1:40

I will continue to work with this new government to find ways that rural health care can be adaptive and responsive to our needs. I know that by involving various health professionals and looking into other opportunities, we can provide timely care that rural Albertans need. There are solutions to be found, and we need to continue to consult, listen, and react to these ideas. Simply improving access to a family doctor can avoid many costly hospital visits.

I have had productive conversations with both the ministers of Health and Infrastructure. We have discussed how our valuable tax dollars can be allocated more efficiently in order to get the care we need while keeping costs reasonable. We have discussed increasing flexibility in local decision-making to allow the outside-the-box solutions to be considered. I have toured the new Grande Prairie hospital, an important hub for care in the Peace Country, to discuss how this project can be effectively and quickly brought to completion, and I have spoken to the minister of seniors to talk about how we can keep our loved ones closer to their home communities in their elder years. I know that in this government we have both a true voice for rural health care and a committed listener. Thank you.

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

Albertans

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Member for Taber-Warner stood in this House and implied that the majority of the opposition caucus members were outsiders to Alberta. This is the same member who bragged about, quote, superior stock of certain groups and admitted his comments, quote, reeked of Aryan overtones. I am disturbed that the member opposite appeared to be sending a signal about which members of this Assembly are true Albertans based on how long they've lived here. It is deeply disappointing to see this government continue to use coded language, fear, and division to imply that some people are not true Albertans, that there are outsiders whose voices are less worth listening to because of when they came here or, perhaps, the way they look.

Of course, it is extra rich because this is the party whose own leader was not born here, a party that shipped in candidates from Ottawa to run in Alberta, including one candidate who had to step down over white supremacist comments, and a party that is full of senior staff from Ottawa and outside of Alberta. By highlighting the opposition caucus members who moved to Alberta from other provinces or countries but failing to point out that the same is true of many members in his own caucus, it was clear that the member was using coded language to send a message. I've heard the members across the aisle complain about identity politics. Maybe it's time they looked in the mirror.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans who are not indigenous to this land came to Alberta from other places to enjoy opportunity, freedom, and the beauty of this province. On this side of the aisle we believe in our duty to listen to the voices of all Albertans, not to pick and choose between insiders and outsiders. Whether someone came to our beautiful province a year ago or whether their family has been here for generations, all people should be welcomed and deserve to be represented in this House. This government would be wise to remember that. But I can assure Albertans that my colleagues on this side of the House absolutely do.

Filibuster of June 5 to 6

Ms Rosin: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to discuss the learning experience that I underwent in the last week of my life. I came into politics knowing that the NDP and I had very different world views, but over the course of a 24-hour filibuster last week it became clear just how different those world views are.

I believe in democracy and free enterprise. After that marathon I can confidently say that our opposition does not. You see, governments typically filibuster to raise awareness on things the public may not be fully aware of. For example, Rand Paul filibustered to raise awareness of drone strikes on American soil, but the NDP: no; they filibustered a campaign promise. Nothing disrespects democracy and the voice of the people more than filibustering the very things that the largest number of Albertans in Albertan history just voted on with resounding support. There are no surprises in the legislation we are putting forward. Albertans knew what they were getting into when they voted for us at the polls, and it is a shame that our opposition would rather tell Albertans that they are wrong than listen to them.

It has also become clear to me just this last week how differently myself and the NDP view free enterprise. Time and time again, members of the opposition insulted job creators, assuming the worst in their character, and called our tax cut a giveaway. How socialist. They truly believe that every dollar Albertans earn and every dollar Albertan businesses generate belong to the government, not those who raised it. A tax cut is not a government revenue giveaway because that money that hard-working Albertans raise was never the government's money in the first place. Governments are not entitled to our money. Governments exist to serve the people; people don't exist to serve the government. Perhaps your opposition would have been a little more satisfied with the outcome of the democracy had they come to realize this.

Mr. Speaker, respect for democracy and free-enterprise spirit are what made Alberta the great place it is to live today. After listening to our opposition's rhetoric for 24 hours too many last week, I can confidently say that there's a reason that voters sent such a clear message at the polls in April, and I am confident that our United Conservative government will be the ones on the right side of history.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. This bill was referred to the committee on May 30, 2019. The committee's final report recommends that Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are any members wishing to speak to the motion for concurrence?

Seeing none, the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills has requested concurrence in the report on Bill 201. Does the Assembly agree to the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That is carried and ordered.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, sponsored by the hon. member to my right, Calgary-West. This bill was referred to the committee on May 30, 2019. The committee's final report recommends that Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are there any members who wish to speak to the motion for concurrence?

Seeing none, hon. members, the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills has requested concurrence in the report on Bill 202. Does the Assembly agree to the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is carried and so ordered.

Point of Order Epithets

The Speaker: Hon. members, I am prepared to rule in response to multiple points of order raised yesterday regarding the use of the mock bill title Bill Hate instead of the official title for Bill 8. Members, arguments on this matter can be found on pages 758 and 759 of yesterday's *Hansard*. I deferred my ruling to consider these arguments as I noted yesterday that many valid points were made

on both sides. On one hand, members of the Official Opposition have an important role in holding the government to account and may on occasion feel the need to use strong language to emphasize their position. However, as noted on page 100 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, one limitation on free speech of members "is provided by the authority of the Speaker under the Standing Orders to preserve order and decorum."

On November 30, 2011, Speaker Kowalski delivered a ruling related to comparing the contents of a bill to historical atrocities in Europe. While the former Speaker did not find a point of order on that occasion, he did provide the member with the opportunity to make a clarification and noted at page 1528 of *Hansard* for that day that "with the great privileges that... members enjoy permitting freedom of speech in this Assembly comes great responsibility."

1:50

A term used in one context may be parliamentary, but that same term in another context may be unparliamentary. As noted in *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, at paragraph 486(1), "It is impossible... to declare beforehand what expressions are or are not contrary to order; much depends upon the tone and manner, and intention, of the person speaking." For that reason, lists of unparliamentary terms may be of limited utility without context.

I might note that the Official Opposition House Leader yesterday referred at some length to lists that may or may not be available. As such, this is why I'm reluctant to declare a particular term to be or not to be parliamentary.

As I noted yesterday, Speaker Zwozdesky struggled with a similar issue during his time as Speaker. Ultimately, in a ruling on April 8, 2013, at page 1719 of *Hansard* for that day the former Speaker concluded that the repeated use of a particular term had taken so much time of the House that it was time for the House to move on and choose different language.

I also acknowledge the ruling referenced by the hon. Government House Leader in his arguments yesterday, which was delivered by Speaker Kowalski on March 22, 2000, at pages 595 and 596 of *Hansard* for that day. Like the matter before us, it also related to mock bill titles. In that case, as in the 2013 ruling, there had been repeated use of a term for many days prior to the ruling. Speaker Kowalski ruled that the reality is that a bill does have a name. A bill does have a title. He concluded that using a synonym or adjective to describe a bill instead of the proper title can provoke debate during question period and found that there was some merit to the point of order as question period is an opportunity for the government to provide information or for the opposition to try to get information, not for debate.

I ask members, as we move forward, to choose their language carefully. Ask yourself whether your intention is to insult or to inflame debate or to levy an accusation against a member opposite or - and perhaps this is the important part - to knowingly cause disorder. If so, I would suggest that you find another means to make your case.

As this is the first opportunity for members to be given this direction on the matter, I for today do not find this as a point of order. However, this ruling should not be considered carte blanche to proceed with using the mock bill title Bill Hate on a regular basis. In fact, I will be listening very closely to any use of the term and the context in which it is used. It is difficult to envision a scenario where the term might not cause disorder. Should we get to the point where order can no longer be maintained by the Speaker on any occasion on which the term is used, I will be prepared to deliver a similar ruling to that of Speaker Zwozdesky in 2013.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Public Service Wage Arbitration Postponement

Ms Notley: The most comprehensive platform in Alberta history – 117 pages, 375 commitments, yada, yada, yada – yet I can't find a single word giving this Finance minister the green light to break legal contracts in order to grab money from teachers, nurses, youth support workers, you name it. It looks to me like: promise hidden, workers broken. To the Minister of Finance: why didn't the UCP come clean on their plan to break the law with workers before the election?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we are just simply seeking to delay these arbitration hearings until this government can build a responsible path forward to ensure that we can bring this province to economic and fiscal balance and deliver high-quality services that Albertans expect, not only for this year but for years and generations to come.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I informed this House of a recent study referenced by a Nobel prize winning economist that shows that less than a third of the Trump corporate tax cut went to investment or to jobs. Meanwhile what we know here in Alberta is that every dime paid to, say, a nurse or a rehab worker goes directly to caring for our loved ones. To the minister. His corporate handout will waste 70 per cent of every dollar, and he is paying for this fiasco by attacking the wages of front-line health care workers. Why?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected this government to not only bring fiscal balance to this province but to create jobs, to attract investment, to create opportunities for all Albertans. Our jobcreation tax cut is one piece in a major initiative that will attract investment, create job opportunities and opportunities for all Albertans, and will guarantee that we can have a world-class education and health care system for today and in future generations.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, this Finance minister is completely ignoring the people who devote their lives to caring for and keeping us safe. He wants to suppress the wages of nurses, of caregivers for seniors, of child therapists, you name it. There is no front-line worker that this minister won't force to bankroll his \$4.5 billion corporate tax giveaway. To the minister: when you're looking to find places to fund your gift to your inside friends, can you do Albertans a favour and not go after the very people caring for our loved ones when they need it the most?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, this government respects and greatly values the contribution that our public sector makes not only to the work of this government but, more importantly, to all Albertans. Again, this is not a removal of rights but simply a postponement of process. We're seeking to postpone the arbitration hearings. This is not about taking money from teachers and nurses.

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

Worker Overtime Pay

Ms Notley: This government is not stopping just at public-sector workers when it comes to attacking people. New, independently verified data released today shows that this government's pick-your-pocket bill could cost up to 400,000 Alberta overtime workers an average of \$150 per week. This works out to an average of \$600

a month, most of the grocery bill. To the Premier: why won't he come clean and at least explain to these 400,000 Albertans why he believes they need to be giving up grocery money as part of the so-called UCP job-creation plan?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly disappointing that the members opposite continue to talk about changes that we're making to banked overtime hours as impacting overtime pay. That is simply not the case. The objective of this change is to provide flexibility for workers and for employers. The old policy led to many construction and seasonal employees having their overtime hours limited. This means they didn't earn money at time and a half or get the opportunity to bank overtime. This change will actually correct that failed policy.

Thank you.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly disappointing when the minister of labour continues to give untrue facts to this House.

Now, the news on wage cuts gets worse when it comes to the oil and gas sector. On average, overtime workers stand to lose \$320 per week. Folks working in this sector have already borne the brunt of the drop in oil prices and now the decades-long failure to build a pipeline to tidewater. To the Premier: does he really think that taking \$320 a week from the pockets of oil and gas workers is the fairest way to bring jobs back to this province?

2:00

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what the Premier thinks the fairest thing to do is, and he's already done it. That is to kill the job-killing carbon tax that that hon. member brought in while she was Premier, the largest tax increase on Albertans that was ever brought in . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mr. Jason Nixon: ... in the history of this province. Our Premier brought in the largest tax decrease in the history of this province. I'm incredibly proud of him. As we know now today from the announcement from the federal government, we know for sure that at least until January 2020 we're going to have the lowest gas prices in the entire country. Thank you again to the hon. Premier of Alberta for that.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:01.

Ms Notley: That temporary respite, Mr. Speaker, will help pay about 3 per cent of the pick-your-pockets bill that ...

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Notley: ... these guys just imposed. This \$320-per-week pickyour-pockets plan for oil and gas workers comes as we learn of more U.S. government delays to pipelines, this government's move to cancel our made-in-Alberta pipeline, and the federal government's decision to double down on slowing pipelines. Talk about piling on. To the Minister of Energy: when she attends rallies in support of the industry, do her speeches talk about her government's plans to cut the wages of those in attendance?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, there's no intention to cut the wages of anybody in attendance. There's just no intention. It's a ridiculous comment from the Leader of the Opposition.

But now that she is talking about the hon. Energy minister, let me just express to the House how proud we are also of the hon. Energy

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minister, who is out fighting hard each and every day for our energy industry, our oil and gas industry, and the men and women who work in it, unlike the former government, who worked against them every day. I am so proud that we have an Energy minister that is out there fighting tooth and nail each and every day for our industry and the people that work in it.

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

Public Service Contract Negotiations

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Finance minister says one thing and does another. On Tuesday in this House he said that he wanted to bargain in good faith with public-sector unions. The very next day he served notice of his intention to break the very contracts that those unions have signed. To the minister: if this is what you consider good-faith bargaining, could you please explain what bargaining in bad faith looks like?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to working with all stakeholders going forward. We also have a great responsibility to Albertans to ensure that we're making fiscally and economically defensible decisions and to ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans. We're simply seeking a delay, a temporary delay, in these arbitration hearings until we have the best information to make the best decisions on behalf of all Albertans.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This from the party that continually talks about the rule of law. Well, let me educate this minister. Working in good faith involves constant communication, collaboration, and consultation. Many of this province's labour leaders have barely heard a word from this government. These labour leaders are gathered here today to keep the government honest. I'm curious: just what consultations did the Minister of Finance or the minister of labour do before plotting to rip up the contracts of nurses, sheriffs, and countless other workers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our department officials have reached out to all affected stakeholders, including affected unions. We certainly intend to co-operate with all stakeholders and work together towards a mutually beneficial solution, a solution that will ensure that we can get onto a path of fiscal responsibility. The opposition, when they were in government, put this province on a trajectory to a hundred billion dollars of provincial debt. That's unacceptable.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Threatening letters are not good-faith consultation.

The moves by this Finance minister show where this government's true allegiances are. Wealthy corporations: they get a tax giveaway. Restaurant lobbyists: they get a whole menu of changes. Nurses: nothing but cuts and broken contracts. Teachers: nothing but layoffs and broken contracts. To the minister: when you're done paying off your friends, how long will emergency wait times be? How crowded will our classrooms be?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected this government to ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans in a sustainable manner. That's high-quality education and health care services for this generation and the next. [interjections] The previous government had us on an unsustainable path to bankruptcy, which would have meant the next generation would not have had any kind of a world-class system for health care and education.

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:06.

Public Service Wages and Women's Economic Equality

Ms Phillips: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. This government's plan to pick the pockets of workers specifically targets women. Surprise, surprise with these guys. But the facts are clear: 66 per cent of teachers are women; 92 per cent of nurses are women. To the Minister of Finance: why is he making the second-worst gender pay gap in the country even worse?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance is rising.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous allegation. The reality is that we are moving forward to be the responsible government that Albertans expect and need at this point. We will bring balance and responsibility to the finances of the province and ensure that we're delivering high-quality services to Albertans.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, we know that this government caucus has trouble with women's issues. The Government House Leader once fired a woman who raised that she was being sexually harassed at work. While in opposition that same House leader directed his caucus to walk out on voting on women's health care a record 13 times. To the Finance minister: he does know that he's not supposed to bring those objectionable views towards women into public policy with this unconstitutional raid on nurses' wages, doesn't he?

The Speaker: The hon. minister for the status of women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it absolutely reprehensible that the opposition brought in a carbon tax that absolutely impacted everyone at an unbelievable level – women, people of the middle class, people that were suffering, choosing between heating their homes and feeding their families – yet this member has the audacity to ask us, based on a platform that we ran on, on making sure that we get back to balance and making sure that ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will have order.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, a history lesson. When the late Premier Ralph Klein went after health care workers in the 1990s, who stopped him? And Calgary laundry workers? Most of them were women. My question to the minister is simple. Why is his priority writing cheques to fancy lawyers in \$5,000 suits so that they can fight court challenge after court challenge for a law that is blatantly unconstitutional rather than acting fairly and lawfully towards hardworking women and men in scrubs? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. We will have order. The hon. minister for the status of women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is obvious that the opposition absolutely did no door-knocking, did not spend any time

with their constituents, had absolutely no idea about the impact that their policies had on oil workers, gas workers. They keep talking about oil and gas. Do you know how many women are employed ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I had no challenge hearing the question. I'm having significant difficulty hearing the answer. I would like to do so. The minister will have as much time as she needs to answer the question if I'm having a hard time hearing her.

Mrs. Aheer: Do you know how many women are employed in the oil and gas sector? Thousands. Do you know how many women are employed in all of the sectors that this government brought absolutely detrimental policy to, which impacted hundreds of thousands of jobs, families, everybody, the difference between feeding your family and heating your house?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is rising.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's youth are often overstressed from trying to balance work, school, and their social life. During this formative time for our young people extra stress can create a platform for mental illness and anxiety to fester. Can the Minister of Health please inform the House about the resources available to aid youth struggling with mental health problems.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and answer the member's question. We campaigned on a fresh approach to mental health and addiction and a real plan. That includes the appointment of the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and a commitment of over \$100 million for a mental health strategy. We're investing in a full continuum of care, with a strong focus on prevention and youth. Our strategy will increase access in primary care because that's where we can intervene earlier to address a mental health problem before it becomes a crisis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is rising.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that all young people can benefit from having access to these resources and given that my constituents may not be aware of these resources and given the importance of lowering the stigma around mental health and increasing access to information, can the minister comment on how these services are advertised to those young people who need them the most? [interjections]

The Speaker: I believe that the Speaker is on his feet. As we've learned on numerous occasions this week, when the Speaker is on his feet, everybody else stops talking, and when he's seated, you all have your opportunity.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know that youth can be hard to reach, especially when they're dealing with mental health issues. Information about accessing mental health services is provided through 811, 211, through the AHS website, through social media. We're going to put patients at the centre of the health care system. That means working with providers in the community because they know their clients better than the government ever

can. Minister Luan is doing exactly that. In fact, just yesterday he had a great meeting with CASA here in Edmonton.

The Speaker: I might just remind the Minister of Health that no matter what the reason is, we wouldn't want to use the name of a minister or otherwise.

The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, again, to the minister. Given that the larger municipalities have greater access to mental health resources when compared to rural areas or smaller communities such as Leduc-Beaumont and given that youth in these communities are just as likely to suffer from mental health illness as the youth in larger municipalities, can the minister please inform my constituents about how these mental health services and advertising will be made accessible to the communities?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are more than 135 addiction and mental health community clinics throughout Alberta. There are also three youth integrated hubs in the province which provide drop-in services. The hubs are a partnership with primary health care providers and other community services. We also fund services in schools across the province through the mental health capacity-building program. Those are the foundations of the system, and we'll build on them with our mental health strategy to make sure of real improvements in access across the province.

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

Public Service Contract Negotiations (continued)

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week members on all sides of this House spoke to a motion about the value of publicsector jobs and what they bring to their local communities. We heard how important public employees like nurses and paramedics are to supporting their families and local businesses, not to mention improving and saving the lives of others. What could be more Albertan than that? Yet yesterday in this House the Minister of Finance repeatedly suggested that forcing them back from the bargaining table at the barrel of legislation is somehow putting Albertans first. To the Minister of Health: do you support your colleague's suggestion that front-line health care workers are somehow not everyday Albertans?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government greatly appreciates the contribution that our health care workers make to all Albertans. We recognize their incredible skill set and their deep commitment to better the lives of Albertans. Again, we're just seeking a delay in arbitration hearings – that's all we're seeking at this point – so that we can build the best plan forward on behalf of all Albertans.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that front-line health care workers have the biggest impact on quality of care for Albertans and given that there's no way this government can keep its promise to improve services while reducing costs without tapping into their knowledge and expertise, to the Minister of Health: do you recognize that when your colleague breaks their contracts and talks about them like a problem to be solved or a cost to be reduced instead of as being valued partners in providing care,

he insults them, lowers morale, and makes it harder not only for them to do their jobs but for you to do yours?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on a commitment to Albertans to maintain or increase health care spending, and that's our commitment to Albertans. We began a process where we are reviewing the processes and the structure of AHS to make sure that we can find efficiencies so we can reinvest in our front-line workers. Our commitment is to continue working with our health care workers and making sure to continue to deliver world-class health care in Alberta.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They did not campaign on breaking contracts.

Given that people, like capital, are mobile and given that uncertainty is every bit as damaging for workers as it is for business and given that under Premier Klein we saw a mass exodus of nurses, doctors, and other health care workers fleeing the uncertainty caused by his cuts and attacks on the public service, to the Minister of Health: do you recognize that the path your colleague is starting down could very well end in a significant loss of trained, experienced front-line workers at a time when Albertans need them most?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, again, as my colleague the Minister of Finance has said, this is about process. It's about a delay of process. We're going to continue to work with our civil service and make sure that we are going to continue to deliver world-class health care. It's incredibly rich that we're now being lectured about cuts to front-line workers when that is a government that cut 28 positions and nurses in the central zone in Red Deer. We are going to continue to make sure that we're going to work with our front-line workers and have patient-focused decisions.

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

Children Living Independently and the Minimum Wage

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we know, the government is implementing a minimum wage rollback for youth in this province. What concerns me about this attack is the youth and how it will affect our most vulnerable. Many foster-age children, aged 15 to 17, actually live independently. They balance going to school and working to pay the bills. Has the Minister of Children's Services spoken with foster children to get a sense of how this rollback on their income will affect their ability to keep a roof over their heads, or are children in care just less important than pleasing the UCP's donors?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's so ridiculous to continue to watch over and over the opposition stand up in the House and do these tactics. If they want to have a reasonable conversation and ask reasonable questions, it would be . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reality of the process the opposition continues to want to do in this House is to go through fear and smear. We talk about it all the time. It's all they want to do. It's such a ridiculous tactic. It's so disappointing to watch that behaviour. I mean, if you look at the Leader of the Official Opposition, I've never seen anything like it in my life. Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order is noted at 2:17. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the response, I guess that's: no, foster children have not been spoken to.

Given that foster children living independently are often our most vulnerable youth in the province and given that this government is actually creating an incentive for these kids to drop out of school, the very students whom we should be supporting to stay in school, and given that these youth will now have a reduced income, making it difficult to put food on the table and support themselves, can the Minister of Children's Services update the House on any increased supports her ministry will offer these youth living on their own, considering they are cutting their wages?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this is about jobs for youth. This government made a commitment during the election to make sure we would stand up for youth, who are having some of the largest unemployment in our population because of that NDP government when they were in power. This is about standing up for the most vulnerable. This is about standing up to give youth opportunities inside our economy, something that the other side of the House just does not seem to understand. This is about jobs, and that's what this government is focused on with a laser focus – jobs, the economy, and pipelines – the complete opposite of those across from us.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard nothing so far to address my concerns about youth living on their own – and clearly that means that this government has not talked to them – and given that this government is in a rush to attack youth wages with just two weeks to go until this minister's plan comes into effect, will the minister of labour commit to delaying any cut to youth wages until he has properly consulted with his colleague the Minister of Children's Services, who will hopefully speak with foster children as well as other relevant groups supporting children and youth?

2:20

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The student job-creation wage is about creating work opportunities for youth. Over 15,000 youth between 15 and 19 are currently looking for work in Alberta. We need to address this. We ran on this platform. We made this commitment. We're going to follow through on this commitment, and I think that our youth can't wait more than two weeks to actually make this happen.

Thank you. [interjection]

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora will come to order.

Farm and Ranch Safety

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents have raised concerns about the safety rules on farms and ranches. In particular, they're concerned about mandatory morning safety meetings and that family members who work on the farm have to attend these meetings. They think it's unnecessary and delays the start of the day. My question is to the Minister of Labour and Immigration. Why are these safety meetings mandatory for family members, and will the minister consider changing this?

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for the question. Occupational health and safety rules only apply to farms and ranches that have waged, nonfamily employees. The rules do not apply to family members or to farms that don't have waged, nonfamily employees. Morning safety meetings are not mandatory under OHS rules; however, it's always good practice for everyone working on the farm to assess potential hazards and talk about safety issues. Just a few minutes at the beginning of the day can help ensure that no one gets hurt during the day.

Thank you.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you for clarifying that, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents also raised concerns about having to record the hours and work activities of family members on the farm. Given that these recorded hours are for WCB insurance, that was mandated by Bill 6, can the minister explain this requirement and what the government's plan is for mandatory WCB coverage on farms and ranches?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the OHS rules, WCB coverage is only mandatory on farms and ranches that have waged, nonfamily workers. Family members are exempt. A producer may voluntarily have WCB coverage for family members, but it's not mandatory.

As we promised in our platform, we will replace Bill 6 with the farm freedom and safety act. One part of that is giving farmers a choice of WCB insurance or getting workplace insurance from the private sector. I can tell the hon. member that my ministry is in discussions with both WCB and private insurance companies about options for farmers and ranchers.

Mr. Rowswell: My constituents will be happy to hear that, Minister.

My final question is also for the Minister of Labour and Immigration. Given that the previous NDP government drafted the current legislation without consulting Albertans and given that our government will be changing this flawed piece of legislation, will farmers and ranchers get to have input on how OHS rules apply to their operations, and when will this happen?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. As I said in my previous answer, we promised to replace Bill 6 with the farm freedom and safety act. In our platform we also promised to consult with farmers and ranchers before we did that. Their input will help us develop new rules that will work for farms and ranches. The new laws will balance the unique needs of farms and ranches with the need for a commonsense, flexible farm safety regime. We will ensure safety standards on farms and ranches while giving employers flexibility and choice. My colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and I will have more to say about consulting with farmers and ranchers in the near future.

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

Red Tape Reduction and Job-creation Strategies

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, government can't work when one minister says one thing and another says another thing. Last week the minister of labour defended all parts of the pick-your-pockets bill, saying, "even if it creates just a little bit of red tape." This is in direct contradiction to the mandate of the associate minister of red tape. My question to the minister: do you agree with the labour minister that imposing red tape on job creators is worth it, or is it just more evidence that your mandate is just a little bit bogus?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, in four years our government will reduce regulatory burden on our job creators and innovators by one-third. We'll take Alberta from being one of the highest compliance-cost jurisdictions to the lowest-cost jurisdictions in North America. In a nutshell, we are going to make Alberta one of the freest and fastest moving economies in the world. In four years we will be able to look Albertans in the eyes and say: promise made, promise kept.

Mr. Nielsen: Make sure to give the minister a copy of that.

Given that the words of the Minister of Labour and Immigration essentially question the reason for the existence of the associate minister's portfolio and given that the associate minister's mandate says that his job will be to target unnecessary and burdensome overregulation that is currently weighing job creators down, my question again is to the associate minister of red tape. With the labour minister saying one thing and your mandate saying another when it comes to red tape, who is actually being straight with Albertans?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, you will remember that when that government was in office, I brought forward a private member's bill to be able to reduce regulatory burden, and they rejected that. Albertans have rejected them and said that there is absolutely no way that they can continue to do business.

This is one of our important measures that we are going to be bringing forward to Albertans to make sure that we can get them back to work and that Albertans can actually have a great place to live.

Mr. Nielsen: Sounds like none of them are being straight.

Given that the minister has committed to repealing regulations when new regulations are introduced and given that the labour minister's new zeal for imposing regulations on job creators with your pick-your-pockets legislation, to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: can you list any of the regulations you've repealed to counter the additional red tape coming from the labour minister? And please be specific this time, Minister.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, that member was in my office twice, and we had the opportunity to talk about these issues. He's grandstanding right now, as this ND Party continues to do. What's so sad about it is that they are Team Angry. Rather than actually looking for real solutions to be able to actually create jobs and increase the economy for Alberta, they continue to be Team Angry. We will not. We will fight for Albertans every day.

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

Driver's Licence Road Tests

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2018 our government took the necessary steps to reform the driver examination system. We heard about issues and concerns from Albertans about the existing system. High fees, poor service, and

lack of service in rural Alberta were all matters that Conservatives completely failed to address during their time in office. Now we see the Transportation minister moving to repeal these changes. To the Minister of Transportation: why are you committed to reimposing on Albertans a system that was generating seven complaints per day from Albertans? Is it ideology or another favour to your donors?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that new drivers in Alberta are adequately tested in a safe and timely manner. That's why we will be reviewing the public takeover of the driver's licence examinations to ensure that Albertans can reasonably access the testing system.

Thank you.

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

Member Loyola: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that a 2016 report found that the previous system of driver examination had the highest fees in Canada and was perceived to be full of mistrust and, I quote, flawed and given that our government acted on this report to improve the system and given that the UCP is now publicly talking about going back to the problems, concerns, and issues that the report highlighted, to the Minister of Transportation. High fees, mistrust, no oversight, and flaws all around: is this really what you want to go back to?

Mrs. Sawhney: Our focus, Mr. Speaker, is on meeting demand at registries across the province so that Albertans can take a road test in a timely manner, and we're committed to clearing the backlog.

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

Member Loyola: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the tragic Humboldt bus crash shocked all Canadians and given that our government responded by increasing the testing requirements through the mandatory entry-level training, or MELT, program and given that there is a fear expressed in the media today that the UCP might cancel the MELT program, which could dangerously send unqualified drivers onto the roads, to the Minister of Transportation: will you do the right thing and commit to this House that your government will maintain the MELT program?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we're committed to driver safety, and we are continuing to review this initiative closely. We'll review the effectiveness of the publicly delivered model to ensure that Albertans have the services that they need and that they require.

Thank you.

2:30 Support for Agriculture

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, Alberta farmers rely heavily on exporting our commodities, whether that be wheat, canola, barley, beef, pork, or any of the vast array of products we produce. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is this government doing to help develop new markets for trade?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to inform this House that Alberta's economic development and trade minister just returned from a trade mission to expand market access opportunities in Asia. That contrasts very sharply to the former NDP minister of economic development and trade, who just last week in this House said, "I'm sorry; if paying a few thousand

dollars extra a month [in carbon taxes] means you went out of business, maybe you need to look at your business plan or at least the management." I'm proud of our minister of economic development and trade, who works with Alberta businesses instead of ridiculing them.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta's agriculture industry has been facing challenges due to the restrictions on selling our canola and pork in China, can the minister tell us what this government is doing to help open up the canola trade in China?

The Speaker: The minister of agriculture.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Market access is extremely important to Alberta farmers, and improving trade relations with China is critical for our canola farmers. We are working with the federal government as Alberta farmers should not be paying the price of this diplomatic dispute. As the member opposite mentioned, when it comes to wheat, 90 per cent gets exported around the world; canola, 80 per cent; cattle, 60 per cent; 55 per cent for hogs. We're doing everything we can to help farmers during this difficult trade time.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that farmers are faced with many different stresses and uncertainty, whether that be weather, markets, equipment failure, or the like, and given that spring input costs can be difficult to manage at the best of times but even more so in this time of uncertainty, Minister, what is this government doing to help farmers struggling to pay their spring seeding bills during this time of uncertainty?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Seeding is almost a hundred per cent complete here in Alberta, and by this fall farmers will have access to the full suite of business risk management programs that we have and farmers have used in the past, whether it's AgriStability, AgriInvest, AgriInsurance, and others, to help farmers out directly. But ultimately, with the carbon tax cut, the largest tax cut in Alberta's history, farmers know that they have a very supportive government.

Bill 8 Consultations

Member Irwin: The Minister of Education has made a number of references to balance and the groups she's consulted in her attempts to destroy GSAs and QSAs. In October of last year she hosted an event for a known anti-LGBTQ organization, Parents for Choice in Education, that's been vocal about their opposition to GSAs. Can the minister please tell this House and all Albertans who else she's consulted in relation to this hateful bill, and, specifically, has she consulted anyone who doesn't agree with her on the attack on the rights of LGBTQ youth?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I have consulted broadly. I've consulted all of the major stakeholders. I've talked to children. I've talked to parents. I've talked to all of them, and that's what they ... [interjections] To a large number of students and stakeholders. Thank you for the question.

Member Irwin: Well, you know, I've heard from a whole heck of a lot of kids, and they sure don't see balance in the legislation this government is proposing to destroy GSAs.

Given that Parents for Choice in Education is a front group for UCP VIP member John Carpay and given that Carpay compared the pride flag to the swastika and given that when those comments emerged, the Premier refused to revoke Carpay's UCP membership, stating that it was up to the party's board, to the government: is John Carpay still a proud UCP member, or are you working to find balance with him, too?

The Speaker: Hon. members, I fail to find any government policy in the question: is an individual a member of a political party or not?

Having said that, if the Government House Leader chooses to answer, he's welcome to do so.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with you completely, but I will appreciate taking the opportunity to respond to the continued misrepresentation of facts by the opposition when it comes to GSAs in this province. I want to be clear again to this House that even once we pass this new legislation with Bill 8, we will still continue to have the strongest statutory protections when it comes to GSAs inside this province. That is a fact. I know the opposition is struggling with facts. They often do struggle with facts. It's, I think, kind of a symptom of the NDP. But the reality is that those are the facts. We'll have the strongest statutory protections in the country.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have no idea what the hon. member might be asking, but if it is about a particular individual and party-related matters, I will rule that question out of order. I encourage you to choose your words wisely.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Given that Carpay also brought forward a legal challenge attempting to stop the protections for LGBTQ youth that we introduced in Bill 24 and given that it was shot down in the courts, who ruled that the bill in no way restricts parents' rights, and given that the courts found that destroying GSAs would have negative effects on improving student performance, reducing drug use, and providing an increased sense of safety in schools, to this government. GSAs actually provide plenty of balance in our schools. They save lives. Why are you set on destroying them?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity again to make clear what this government's policy is. It's certainly not what the opposition is saying. It is to protect GSAs. That was in our platform. It is inside every act that we are making as a government when it comes to education. The Education minister has been clear on that. The Premier has been clear on that. I've been clear on that. By the end of this process we will continue to have the strongest statutory protection when it comes to GSAs. That's a fact. The hon. members, I know, are struggling with those facts. That fine. But the reality is that that is a fact. We will have the strongest statutory protections in the entire country.

Abortion Rights

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, trigger warning. I'll be asking about bubble zones, so now may be a good time for the government to leave the Chamber. In the last Legislature our caucus voted 13 times to affirm the right of a women to access legal health care without fear of harassment. The UCP rose 13 times and ran away. Our caucus showed the leadership needed and passed Bill 9 to create bubble zones around abortion clinics. Now we see the media reports that the bubble zones have worked to deter harassment of their patients. Does the Government House Leader regret directing his colleagues to walk out on women's rights, and will you apologize to Albertans for ...

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of status of women. [interjections]

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I don't know if anybody is going to be able to hear me. The interesting thing about the questions that are coming right now from the opposition is that they're attacking. There's absolutely nothing to be able to be answered on this side because of the rhetoric. They're campaigning. They are still smearing and fearing throughout this entire House. If there is a question that is relevant, I would be happy to answer it.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has the call.

Ms Goehring: Given that an entire caucus walking out of 13 votes has never been recorded before in Alberta history and given that a former Clerk of the Assembly described the UC's walkout as a total abrogation of opposition's responsibility and given that the Kensington clinic is now reporting that as a result of Bill 9 it is now safer for women to access their services and for the workers at the clinic, to the Minister of Health: will you commit to providing any and all supports and resources needed by any abortion clinics in Alberta to properly serve their patients?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister for the status of women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much for the question. I am absolutely committed to being able to do work to make sure that we adequately consult and make sure that all appropriate things are done.

Thank you so much.

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, given the astonishing 13 times the UCP walked out on their duty to serve Albertans and given that the improvements in safety that Bill 9 has made to the patients and workers of Alberta's abortion clinics and given the concern that the clinics have expressed regarding ongoing electronic harassment through e-mail and phone calling, to the Minister of Health: will you admit that Bill 9 was necessary and commit to working with clinics to combat electronic harassment, or will you and your colleagues turn your back on women's health care once again?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister for the status of women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Again to answer the question: absolutely we are committed to working with all parties that are asking these questions. As always, our doors are always open, and we are very happy to consult and make sure that we are protecting women's rights.

Thank you.

2:40

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

Education Act

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. As a father of four I was incredibly happy to see the minister recently announce plans to modernize our Alberta education system by replacing the School Act with the Education Act. Unlike the previous NDP government, the minister has affirmed the government's commitment to respect the hard work done by stakeholders over multiple years of robust consultation. Can the minister please explain how the Education Act will improve our province's education system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the hon. member for the question. Proclaiming the Education Act will make Alberta schools the diverse, excellent classrooms that all Albertans desire and deserve. It modernizes our education system by replacing a piece of legislation originally introduced in 1988. To put it into perspective: cellphones and the Internet barely existed. At the end of the day, this legislation is based on values we believe are fundamental to supporting our students.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that modernizing our education system will require adjustments for our school boards, with the current school year coming to an end and the summer break about to begin, can the minister please explain to this House how the government will ensure a smooth transition for school authorities across this province?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. With our commitment to have the Education Act come into force for the next school year, we recognize that some updates to the legislation are needed. We have proposed that the current age of access, the age of compulsory attendance, and residency rules remain in effect under the Education Act. These existing rules are working well for students and school boards at this time. We believe our proposed amendments will provide schools with the certainty that they need to effectively transition for the upcoming school year.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that a concern that I've heard around the Education Act is about the rules for student transportation, school districts across this province are already communicating busing schedules to parents, and families are already creating transportation plans for the upcoming school year, can the minister please explain how the Education Act will affect transportation for students across this province?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member, for the question. I'm most happy to provide certainty and consistency to parents and school boards. We are proposing that we maintain the current rules for busing. Changes to eligibility or service this close to the coming school year could lead to significant financial implications or major service changes for families. We will remain committed to supporting our families and students and providing them with the supports they need to succeed during their studies.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul is rising with a question.

Fishing Regulations

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the last four years I have attended many town halls and meetings in communities concerned about the lack of fish harvesting opportunities. Although the message was consistent from anglers and guides that walleye populations were exploding in many northern lakes, the previous government's answer was to close more lakes and impose more restrictions on others. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: will you review the consultations conducted over the last few years, meet with concerned groups, and lift the new restrictions imposed in the 2019 regulations?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. The answer is simple: yes. We will be reviewing all prior consultation. I'm happy to meet with any stakeholder group involved in this important issue. I know that they struggled to get meetings with the previous government. I met with them often in opposition, and I look forward to meeting them as the Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much for the answer, minister. Given that residential licence purchases dropped by 35,582 from 2015 to 2018, a loss of \$996,296 in Alberta revenue, and given that nonresident licence purchases also dropped by two-thirds over that period at a loss of between \$400,000 and \$500,000, not to mention the tourism dollars lost – people are not coming to Alberta to fish – and given that at the same time walleye special draw applications doubled and 27,000 Albertans purchased licences in Sask-atchewan ...

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member raises an important issue, and I think it's worth the conversation. To be clear, though, the Environment and Parks department, going forward, when it makes decisions in regard to species harvesting will be based on science that's available in making the best decision for the species to make sure that we have an opportunity to harvest now but will also have an opportunity to harvest for future generations. We will continue to balance both those issues. What I can assure the hon. member and through him to his constituents is that we will be open for that conversation and making sure that they are included in that process.

Mr. Hanson: I'll try to speak faster, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Cold Lake fish hatchery in my constituency was designed for and has the capacity to produce between 40 million and 60 million walleye fingerlings per year and those fingerlings have the potential to grow to 40 centimetres in just three years, Minister, we are losing opportunities for tourism to Saskatchewan, we are losing over \$1 million in license fees alone, and municipalities are willing to participate to diversify their economies. If a financial case can be made, will your ministry consider restoring the walleye program in Alberta?

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the hon. member for the question. It's obvious that he's passionate about this issue. It's an interesting conversation around hatcheries. I think it's worth having that conversation. Just recently I had it with my department. We'll have a look at it going forward. We have a few ideas, and I think we'll have more to say in the

coming days, but I appreciate him bringing it forward, and I encourage him through you to continue with that passion. We'll make sure that we get it right.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 9

Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

This bill will enable government to postpone wage reopener arbitration for a number of major public-sector agreements. By deferring the arbitration hearings, we will know more about our economic situation and be able to consider the MacKinnon panel's expert advice. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that no decision on how to proceed with the arbitrations has been made. Our intent is to merely postpone these proceedings until after October 31, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, and I look forward to providing more details shortly.

Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:		
Aheer	Loewen	Sawhney
Allard	Long	Schow
Amery	Lovely	Schulz
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schweitzer
Copping	Milliken	Shandro
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nicolaides	Smith
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Goodridge	Panda	Toor
Gotfried	Pon	Turton
Guthrie	Rehn	van Dijken
Hanson	Reid	Williams
Horner	Rosin	Wilson
Hunter	Rowswell	Yao
Jones	Rutherford	Yaseen
LaGrange		
Against the motion:		
Bilous	Ganley	Pancholi
Carson	Goehring	Phillips
Ceci	Gray	Renaud
Dach	Hoffman	Sabir
Dang	Irwin	Schmidt
Deol	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Nielsen	Sweet
Feehan	Notley	
Totals:	For – 49	Against – 23

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

The Speaker: I recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to extend daily Routine past 3 p.m.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Bill 10

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 10, Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019.

Alberta's personal income tax system is closely linked with federal legislation that changed in the spring of 2018. The previous government failed to amend legislation that will ensure our tax system works efficiently with the federal system. Our government is introducing the amendments to ensure that Albertans, and especially members of the Canadian Forces and veterans, will have access to the tax credits they're entitled to. These changes also protect small-business owners from tax increases on the dividends they earn. Mr. Speaker, these amendments are largely technical in nature, but they ensure the continued, efficient functioning of our income tax system in harmony with the federal system.

With that, I move first reading of the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

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

Bill 203 An Act to Protect Public Health Care

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care.

Mr. Speaker, access to health care should not depend on the size of your wallet or the balance on your credit card. This act will strengthen our ability to defend Albertans from American-style health care creeping into our province. This legislation will address issues associated with fee-based private health clinics that charge fees for access to necessary health services. The goal is to make sure that no Albertan will need to fear going into debt to pay for the medical services they need, and it will reduce the risk of preferential access to medically necessary health services.

Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care will protect access to publicly funded, publicly delivered health care in Alberta. This side of the House will continue to stand up and say no to Americanstyle health care and ensure that our hospitals and health centres are available to everyone who needs them.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to table a document? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is looking to table a document.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies of documentation, statistics from Statistics Canada, that show that the average employee who earns overtime will lose \$150 per week; oil and gas: \$320; and construction: potentially \$200. Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with the requisite number of copies to table a document I made reference to last evening in this Chamber called Legally Speaking: the Guarantee of Catholic Education: the Doctrines of Hollow Rites and Permeation, in which they tell us that it is an important doctrine of constitutional law that constitutional rights, once granted, must not be minimalized or diminished to hollow rights. They must in all interpretations be given a large, liberal interpretation, and that includes rights for gay people. Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act, the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta annual report, 2018.

3:10

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. I might just add that I would hope that we will stay focused on the points of order and not have a continuation of debate from question period on a Thursday afternoon.

With that said, the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Epithets

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Standing Orders (h), (i), (j). The Minister of Environment and Parks, who, I will say, coincidentally rose on a point of order minutes after my point of order for the exact same thing, yet the shoe is on the other foot. He referred to the "job-killing" carbon tax, which, of course, is a nickname that he and the UCP gave to a bill when we were government, yet he's about to rise on a point of order for the "pick-your-pockets" bill, which it is, you know, affectionately referred to as by some Albertans and this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think, again, this is a matter of debate. There is a freedom of speech allowed in this House, as we spoke about yesterday. I have a number of examples of the members that are now in government when they were in opposition. In fact, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, April 12, 2017, during question period referred to the job-killing carbon tax. On October 29, 2018, the Premier, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm not entirely convinced if you are defending a point of order or calling a point of order. Clearly, I heard in your statement that this is a matter of debate. It certainly sounds a lot like a matter of debate to me. Let's see if you are correct in your assertion of what the Government House Leader was going to do on the second point of order.

Point of Order Epithets

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise on a similar issue but from a different context, and I think that, as we talk about this point of order, context matters.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I am rising on 23(h), (i), and (j). I will be brief as it is Thursday, and I know you are probably anxious to go home to your family as much as everybody else in this Chamber.

But it's disappointing that the opposition continues to choose to ignore the very warnings you issued in your ruling before question period. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I believe you made reference to a ruling by the former Speaker on April 8, 2013, and at that time the former Speaker concluded that repeated use of a particular term has taken so much of the House time that it was time to choose a new language.

I draw your attention to the question asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition when referring to Bill 2 as the "pick-your-pocket" bill. I stress the word "bill." Personally, I find that offensive. We've let it slide on numerous occasions. I believe the term ... [interjection] Again, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I have the floor. I believe the term has been used over 30 times in this sitting alone. Let's be clear, the intent of the opposition is to imply that the members of this government are committing a crime with our legislation. I can tell you and the opposition that the provisions of Bill 2 were very well publicized in our platform commitments as part of our proposal to get Albertans back to work. In my opinion, I find the language of "pick-your-pockets," in particular, to be offensive and, further to that, an allegation.

The Speaker: Thank you for your interjections, hon. member. I would just note that you are correct in your assertion that the context of how the statements are made is very, very important. I would suggest to you that using names for bills certainly could become unparliamentary, and, you know, with respect to my comments previously around Bill 8, I would say that this language is significantly stronger. You yourself said that this particular statement, "pick-your-pockets" bill, has been raised 30 times, and at no point has that created disorder inside the Chamber up until today. I clearly would say that on this occasion and the previous 30 occasions, that is not a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Opposition House Leader has indicated to me that he can't remember the order of the points of orders, which is probably fair because, I think, several were called, so I'll rise on my second and last one.

I'm a little bit concerned that the timing may not have been quite noted in the chaos of question period, but again I'm rising on Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). During question period the Leader of the Official Opposition stated in a question that would ultimately go to the labour minister: I'm disappointed when the minister of labour continues to give untrue statements. I think it's quite clear that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to use language of a nature likely to create disorder. She had to apologize yesterday for making a similar statement, so to do it again in a second period seems kind of troubling. Yesterday you ruled that the context of the statement that she made yesterday, which was "the House leader just can't stop saying things that are untrue" - perhaps the Official Opposition House Leader forgot to inform the Leader of the Opposition that he had to stand in this place yesterday, withdraw, and apologize on behalf of his leader, or she just has no respect for your rulings in this Chamber. Again, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that it's the exact same situation and the Official Opposition House Leader should rise and apologize and withdraw on behalf of his leader.

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader, I'm happy to hear your interjections on this point of order.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader can't have it both ways. Today in question period he used the phrase:

misrepresentation of the facts. The point of order yesterday was for the Leader of the Official Opposition using the word "stealing." Today's language is nowhere near yesterday's language. It is not unparliamentary language. This is a difference of opinion, two different sets of facts that you have ruled on numerous times over. I will not apologize for the Leader of the Official Opposition's language today when it is in line with language that the Government House Leader used today as far as a difference of opinion when it comes to the facts.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I would like to provide some comments around this particular point of order because during that particular question that was asked and answered, I was inclined to send a note to the Leader of the Official Opposition and remind her that yesterday she was corrected for saying that the member is making untrue statements. At that time yesterday I said that if the government or the opposition wants to use strong language referring to something that the government is doing, that would in fact be parliamentary, but implying that a member of the House is making untrue statements, like I ruled yesterday, is moving in the direction of saying that a member has lied. We all know that's unparliamentary, and the Leader of the Official Opposition is welcome to apologize and withdraw.

Mr. Bilous: Well, Mr. Speaker, seeing that you have provided some advice and direction in your infinite wisdom, I will take such advice and withdraw and apologize for her comment.

The Speaker: Please proceed. The Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder False Allegations

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. The time was around, I believe, 2:15. The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance said that we put the province on a path to bankruptcy. Now, I rise on 23(h), (i), (j) for a couple of reasons. The first and most obvious is that this comment is, of course, extremely insulting language that was intentionally used. We talk about context. That was used intentionally to create disorder in this House. Number two, the statement is also patently false. Our government was not about to run the government of Alberta or the treasury into bankruptcy. I think that's a pretty clear black-and-white comment that is false. For those two reasons I rise on a point of order and request that the Government House Leader apologize and withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. This is clearly a matter of debate and, you know, a difference of opinion when it comes to facts. I do recognize that the opposition is probably a little bit sensitive about the fact that they oversaw a government that put us on track to \$100 billion in debt, but the reality is that's something that's very free to be debated in this place, has been debated for a long time, and is a matter of debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the statement that was made – I do have the benefit of the Blues, and the hon. Official Opposition House Leader is correct. It says, "The previous government had us on an unsustainable path to bankruptcy, [interjections] which would have meant the next generation would not have had any kind of a world-class system for health care and education." One of the particular challenges that is before us and something that we all need to be considerate of when we are using language that is strong,

that may create disorder is also the context in which we may or may not be making allegations about another member. I would remind all hon. members that we wouldn't want to make to an allegation about the Leader of the Official Opposition, just like she wouldn't want to make an allegation of you or of other members here in the Assembly. Having said that, I do agree with the Government House Leader that this is a matter of debate but would caution all members about the language that they choose. Lastly.

Las

3:20

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order that was then between 2:15 and 2:30, when one of our members was asking the Minister of Children's Services questions – I believe it was the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – to which the Government House Leader insisted on responding to the question. Obviously, that's the prerogative of the front bench. However, the Minister of Environment and Parks went on to chastise the member for asking a question which was a question trying to derive information from the government, which is part of the reason for question period.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I jumped up on a point of order because the Government House Leader is trying intentionally to interfere with the opposition doing their job, which, during question period, is to derive information from ministers. At that point the Government House Leader used the 35 seconds to try to chastise the opposition for "fear and smear" when, quite frankly, their questions were directly to the Minister of Children's Services trying to derive information about children and government policy. I find it very important that the opposition is able to do its job in this place, especially during question period, which is to hold the government to account and to ask for information. In this instance it was clearly a question deriving information. It was not a partisan question or attack. I think it's extremely important that the government doesn't interfere with the opposition trying to do their job, as the Government House Leader did.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I agree with many of the statements that you've made, including that it is important for the government not to interfere with the opposition trying to do your jobs. I also know that you know that, much to the chagrin of the Speaker from time to time, it is not the Speaker's job to determine the quality of the answer. While I have no opinion of the Government House Leader's answer, I don't see any language that is likely to create disorder. I do not make the determination on who answers a question or who doesn't answer a question. As such, I'm struggling to understand how the Government House Leader answering your question in a way that may not have been an effective answer would in fact create an inability for the opposition to do their job. As such, this point of order is not well taken.

We have concluded points 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 **The Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak who have not yet done so?

[Motion carried]

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Premier.

Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

16. Mr. Jason Nixon moved on behalf of Mr. Kenney: Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18(1)(a). Are there any wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the Government House Leader to close debate.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

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

Bill 7 Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and to the members for this opportunity to continue discussion with regard to the bill about nothing. But here we are debating it nonetheless. Just to reiterate, there was extensive - extensive - consultation that went into work with municipalities around the Municipal Government Act and subsequent reg packages. I think there were actually three substantial sets of reg packages that came forward that related to the MGA. This was done over a number of years under both governments, definitely the government under the time that Premier Hancock was Premier, probably Premier Redford, and definitely continued under future Premiers after that as well. This is something that worked quite extensively over many different iterations not just of government in terms of provincial government but government in terms of local municipal governments. There were extensive consultations - oh. [Disturbance outside the gallery] Sorry. It's hard to continue discussing this when clearly there is great enthusiasm in the rotunda to discuss labour law in this place.

The Deputy Chair: I can hear you, just so you know.

Ms Hoffman: You can't hear them?

The Deputy Chair: I can hear you.

Ms Hoffman: Oh, you can hear me. Yeah. I can hear myself. I can also hear them. Thank you very much.

I want to continue on by saying that through that very extensive consultation that happened over many, many years with municipal officials, both elected and nonelected, there was a commitment to develop a municipal governance act, and through that, again, subsequent sets of regulations that brought about significant changes, many of the changes that are actually in this proposed bill. I imagine there are more things that municipalities would like to see amended in terms of their working relationship and future encounters with provincial government and their autonomy and definitely their need for sustained funding that is sufficient to meet the needs of their municipalities. That's probably the number one that I've heard.

At the last event, I believe, I attended, it was important that municipalities talk about the funding model, that they make sure that they have opportunities for sustainable funding. They did not, I think I mentioned, at RMA bring up this proposed bill about nothing even once. Not one person there brought it up at RMA prior to the election, and I certainly haven't heard directly from municipal leaders that they wanted this since the election either.

3:30

Again, I believe that most of the municipalities that we've engaged with said that they found this confusing and weren't exactly sure why it was being proposed, that there were certainly a number of other things they would love the Minister of Municipal Affairs to bring forward to cabinet and subsequently to this Chamber to support them in doing their jobs. But this is not one of the things that they mentioned as being a barrier to them or desirable through the engagements we've had with mayors of mid-sized cities, and then of course the mayors of the large cities have been very vocal in what they've had to say about this.

That being said, I again feel that this bill is about nothing, and it doesn't behoove us to continue moving this through the process as I think that there are many, many, many things that are important for us to consider our precious time being used for. Certainly, discussing changes to labour law, I know, is something that members in the public space outside this Chamber are interested in us being accountable and transparent about, especially things that weren't mentioned in the election process or the platform.

I will cede my time at this point and turn the floor back to you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. government opposition – sorry. We're just going to go with Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am rising to speak to Bill 7, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. The reason I rise is that I know that my hon. colleague the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has been engaging with mayors around the province, trying to determine, you know, as quickly as he can, to what level this government consulted with municipalities. Quite frankly, he's heard from a number of mayors who are kind of scratching their heads as to where this came from.

For that reason, Mr. Chair, I am moving an amendment, which I will pass through the pages to yourself. Obviously, the top copy is the one signed by Parliamentary Counsel. At your direction I will read this into the record.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will read this, again, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Moved that Bill 7, Municipal

Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by adding the following after section 9:

Report

- 10(1) In this section,
 - (a) "city charter" means a charter established for a city under section 141.3 of the Municipal Government Act, and includes an amendment to a charter;
 - (b) "intermunicipal collaboration framework" means a framework as defined in section 708.26(1)(a) of the Municipal Government Act;
 - (c) "Minister" means the Minister of Municipal Affairs;
 - (d) "municipality" has the meaning given to it in the Municipal Government Act.

(2) The Minister shall consult with municipalities on the amendments made by this Act, including any impacts on regional collaboration, city charters and intermunicipal collaboration frameworks.

(3) Consultations required under subsection (2) shall be completed by September 1, 2019.

(4) The Minister shall prepare a report outlining the results of the consultations required under subsection (2), and shall

- (a) make the report available to the public by September 30, 2019, and
- (b) lay a copy of the report before the Legislative Assembly as soon as practicable if it is sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Coming into force

- 11(1) Section 10 comes into force on August 1, 2019.
- (2) Sections 1 to 9 come into force on October 1, 2019.

Again, Mr. Chair, the purpose of this, for all members of the Assembly, is to ensure that the Minister of Municipal Affairs consults on these proposed changes to ensure that municipalities have a true, comprehensive understanding of the proposed changes.

As well, Mr. Chair, I think one of the concerns – and it was one that I outlined, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and other colleagues of ours. A number of changes that we had made to the Municipal Government Act, MGA, and also the direction that our government went were really trying to encourage collaboration between municipalities. That was whether through regional collaboration on intermunicipal collaboration frameworks as well as through funding. The CARES program, community and regional economic support, was for municipalities to be able to work together to be able to compete on the world stage. We want to ensure that we're not going to cause municipalities to undo the incredible collaborative work that they've done in a race to the bottom in competition with each other in order to try to attract investment.

I've given examples in second reading of this bill, Mr. Chair, as far as examples like the trimunicipal partnership up in Grande Prairie, with the city of Grande Prairie, the county of Grande Prairie, and the MD of Greenview, as well as areas like Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association, that has a number of municipalities that have agreed upon a revenue-sharing model in order to go out and attract investment and businesses. Had they followed the tools that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is outlining in this bill, they would be competing with each other instead of coming together as a region to say: "Come to this area. We recognize that we all benefit from it." It's not just property taxes; it's the jobs, it's the workers, and it's the services that they rely on.

With that, we feel – and I'm proud to move this amendment on behalf of my colleague – that this would ensure that the Minister of Municipal Affairs takes the time to consult with municipalities, because, Mr. Chair, I do want to point out the fact that the current government, when they were opposition, would constantly talk about how our government didn't go out and consult when, in fact, we did. We've spoken to mayors who have said: they never talked to us about this. For me, it's pretty rich that now that the shoe is on the other foot and the opposition is in government, suddenly consultation doesn't matter. They talk about how they had a mandate. Well, you know what? The government may have won a significant number of seats, but they did not win the ability to be a dictator. They do still need to go out and consult with stakeholders. The mandate doesn't give them carte blanche to do whatever they want.

What we're doing through this amendment is saying: "We want to make sure that the municipal leaders have been properly engaged in this. Here's an opportunity." We're not trying to kill this bill or end this bill. We're just saying: go out and consult with municipal leaders, come back to the House, but let's make sure that we preserve the incredible work that municipalities have made in collaborating with each other in order to compete on the world stage.

With that, I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Do I see any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore standing.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me so I can just add a couple of quick thoughts here on Bill 7. It won't take very long. As you can imagine, I am in support of this amendment. I think the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was very, very clear. I know there was a mandate from the people of Alberta that elected a UCP government, but they didn't elect them to blow off consultations. There's a responsibility on that part, and certainly in the last Legislature I heard from members who are sitting again in this House that would repeatedly, almost ad nauseam, talk about how our government wasn't going out and consulting.

When I looked at the bill itself, I was trying to figure out what we were trying to accomplish here, and quite honestly it kind of started to revolve around creating some red tape here to do - I don't know – something that it was already given the ability to do through changes to the MGA.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview also noted quite well about potentially creating conditions for municipalities to compete against themselves, which is that, as he said, race to the bottom. I'm starting to see a little bit of a theme here where we're blindly racing to the bottom: "We don't need to check because, you know, we knocked on a few doors, and that's our mandate. We know what to do. We don't need any consultations."

3:40

I would certainly urge members in the House to look at this very, very closely because municipalities are rightfully concerned given that the government has already committed to a \$4.5 billion tax break here. They want to know where, quite honestly, their money is coming from, too. I think that by accepting this amendment, we give our municipalities the opportunity to quickly add their voices to the discussion, and we are able then to potentially create some legislation that they can work with. But at this time I'm getting a pretty good sense that that's not the case.

With that, I will take my seat. I think I've added my comments there. I just don't want to see this, again, bit of a conflict between: well, let's get rid of red tape, but we're going to create red tape. I'm trying to figure out how ministers are going to balance this kind of thing out. The Deputy Chair: Other members looking to speak to amendment A1?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to Bill 7, are there any members looking to speak?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: All those opposed? Carried.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following: Bill 7. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: This is a nondebatable report under Standing Order 18(1)(b). Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered. I see the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to all hon. members from all parties in the House for another great week of progress. I wish everybody safe travelling back to their homes. With that, I will move to adjourn the Assembly until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:44 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)

Activity to Thursday, June 13, 2019

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)

First Reading - 8 (May 22, 2019 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 44 (May 23, 2019 aft.), 79-92 (May 27, 2019 eve.), 95-107 (May 28, 2019 morn.), 121-43 (May 28, 2019 aft.), 166-70 (May 28, 2019 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (May 29, 2019 aft.), 239-41 (May 29, 2019 eve.), (May 30, 2019 morn., passed)

Third Reading — 246-51 (May 30, 2019 morn.), 327-339 (Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed)

Royal Assent —(Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1]

Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)

First Reading — 58 (May 27, 2019 aft., passed) Second Reading — 145-52 (May 28, 2019 eve.), 189-90 (May 29, 2019 morn.), 236-39 (May 29, 2019 eve.), 375-79 (Jun. 4, 2019 aft.), 416-17 (Jun. 4, 2019 eve.), 448 (Jun. 5, 2019 aft.), (Jun. 5, 2019 eve.), (Jun. 5, 2019 eve.), assed on division)

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

First Reading — 111 (May 28, 2019 aft., passed) Second Reading — 236 (May 29, 2019 eve.), 341-53 (Jun. 4, 2019 morn.), 408-16 (Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed) Committee of the Whole — (Jun. 5, 2019 eve.), (Jun. 11, 2019 morn.), 685-700 (Jun. 11, 2019 aft.), 738-45 (Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed) Third Reading — (Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed)

Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)

First Reading — 202 (May 29, 2019 aft., passed) Second Reading — 277-78 (May 30, 2019 aft.), 365-75 (Jun. 4, 2019 aft.), 432-48 (Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division) Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed) Third Reading — 644-46 (Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed)

Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 779 (Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed)

Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)

First Reading — 356-57 (Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed) Second Reading — 625-31 (Jun. 10, 2019 aft.), 653-60 (Jun. 11, 2019 morn.), 701-07 (Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed) Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed)

Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 421 (Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 648-49 (Jun. 10, 2019 eve.), 707-25 (Jun. 11, 2019 eve.), 781-95 (Jun. 12, 2019 eve., adjourned on amendment)

Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)

First Reading — (Jun. 13, 2019, passed on division)

Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)

First Reading — (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed)

Bill 201 — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)

First Reading — (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills)

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