



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 19, 2019

Day 16

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),
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Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Premier
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UCP), Government House Leader
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),
Deputy Government Whip
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

Parliamentary Secretary

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Chair: Mr. Gotfried
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard
Eggen
Getson
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Irwin
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Gray
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Issik
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Amery
Carson
Ganley
Glasgo
Guthrie
Irwin
Long
Neudorf
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Rutherford
Walker
Yao

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Ellis
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge
Gray
Lovely
Nixon, Jeremy
Rutherford
Schmidt
Shepherd
Sigurdson, R.J.
Sweet

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Armstrong-Homeniuk
Dang
Deol
Goehring
Goodridge
Gotfried
Long
Sweet
Williams

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried
Horner
Irwin
Neudorf
Nielsen
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sigurdson, L.
Sigurdson, R.J.

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Deol
Ganley
Horner
Issik
Jones
Loyola
Neudorf
Rehn
Reid
Renaud
Turton
Yao

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery
Barnes
Dach
Feehan
Guthrie
Hoffman
Renaud
Rosin
Rowswell
Stephan
Toor
Turton
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening, everyone. Please be seated.

Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Time Allocation on Bill 9

23. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than six hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you this evening. Do I go straight into my time right now? Thank you very much.

I want to start off by just pointing out the misconception that has been taking place inside this Chamber for the last few days. In fact, we watched hon. members of the opposition rise over and over in this House and say that time allocation had already taken place inside this House, which was not true. We watched some of the members rise and say that they had been allotted only one hour to speak on the bill though for two nights already this week, as you know because you've been in the Chamber, we have kept debate on Bill 9 going well into the wee hours of the morning. Last night I think it was 2:30.

An Hon. Member: It was the Premier who said an hour.

Mr. Jason Nixon: No, it wasn't the Premier. It was the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Anyways, it was 2:30 in the morning. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The opposition will have the floor in a moment. I'm sure we can look forward to hearing what they have to say.

The point is that they are misrepresenting the facts when it comes to this issue. Bill 9 during second reading was well debated, two days. Interestingly enough, time allocation was not needed for us to proceed with the business of this House. Also, interestingly enough, Madam Speaker, not all of the members of the Official Opposition even bothered to speak to Bill 9. There were opportunities for that that were provided completely by the government because debate by the opposition is important. While I think that their communication ability on the bill has been very ineffective and that they have spent most of their time playing political games rather than debating the bill, that's their prerogative and their decision. But the reality is that they had more opportunity to debate it. If this was as important for the constituents that they represent as they have said, you would think that they would have made sure to use all that time to debate that legislation. They did not. Last night it passed second reading, with, again, room for hon. members to speak and no time allocation.

The reality is that we are going to pass the agenda that Albertans sent us to pass in this House. We are going to provide ample

opportunity for all members to be able to debate in this House, but if the opposition continues to play games as we move this legislation through, we will be moving reasonable time allocation to make sure that we don't plug up the House and so we can make sure that we do the business that Albertans sent us here to do. As such, I move time allocation on Committee of the Whole, a reasonable time allocation, not what the NDP used to do to us; it would be one hour or so. We'll have six hours tonight. I look forward to it.

I want to also point out one last misconception that has been brought forward by the Official Opposition, where they said that they were not allowed to do amendments to the bill. Well, Madam Speaker, that is also a misrepresentation of the facts. Here's their opportunity, as we go into Committee of the Whole, to move all the amendments that the opposition would like to move. That's more than an ample amount of time. In fact, during second reading – it was about 13 hours or so – again almost every member of the opposition was able to speak.

This is a reasonable amount of time, and I look forward to hearing what the Official Opposition has to say. Again, Madam Speaker, let me be clear. We will put the agenda that Albertans voted for in record numbers through this House, and we will use the tools that are available to us to move that agenda forward despite the protests from the opposition. Again, through you to them, I call on them, as always, to get some humility and to examine why they are the only one-term government in the history of this province and how they ended up on that side of the House. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I realize that tonight's debate might get rather heated, but I think it would be most respectful for us to make sure that all members, while speaking, are heard in this House. Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will close with this, my initial point, which is that the agenda that the people of Alberta voted for in record numbers will pass in this Chamber. Those are the instructions that we have been sent here with. Your constituents and my constituents made it clear to us when they sent us here. That's what will happen.

At the same time, we will go out of our way to make sure that the Official Opposition has every opportunity to be able to do their job. I encourage them to do it and stop playing games, as they have, inside this Legislature, to get focused on debating bills and not pretend that they haven't been allowed to, actually put forward speakers, using their time effectively inside this House, and to stop obstructing what Albertans voted for on April 16.

The Deputy Speaker: It is now time for a member of the Official Opposition to speak. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Democracy in action UCP style, so we see. Let's clarify a couple of things first that the hon. Government House Leader said. First off, there has not been closure enacted on all three stages of a bill since 1990 – fun fact – when the NDP was the Official Opposition. So that's convenient. When we were in government, we enacted closure on one stage of two different bills – one stage – after two and a half weeks of debate, not a bill that was introduced at the beginning of a week that we are now progressing through in one week. That's a fun fact.

The other piece of this is that this was not a platform commitment by the UCP. They can stand here and say that they have credit and that they were voted in on this mandate. This was not in the platform; this was not a mandate that Albertans gave them. This is actually breaking the law. So let's clarify a couple of points there.

In addition to that, let's talk about closure and invoking time allocation. The now Premier of Alberta said on December 8, 1998:

The government announced its intention to invoke time allocation on both report stage and third reading only two hours into the debate. I must say that while I commend the minister for the work that he, his officials and his parliamentary secretary have put into this bill, I think it is disappointing, to say the least, that the government has, in passing such a critically important piece of legislation, so carelessly and callously disregarded the best traditions of [democracy] . . . in this place.

Another quote from the Premier of Alberta:

I am pleased to rise in debate on this bill at report stage. I regret the use of time allocation, closure and all the usual heavy-handed, undemocratic tactics employed by the government, as this has been my first opportunity to attempt to articulate the overwhelming consensus . . . on this matter.

How about we go to the Government House Leader and what he said when time allocation was implemented when he was in the opposition?

It should be unacceptable to Albertans because this is the Assembly where their issues are supposed to be dealt with. This is where democracy is supposed to take place. This is where debate is supposed to happen, and by the government taking this action, they are stifling debate. They're not just stifling the opposition members; they're stifling the people who sent us here to represent them, and I think that they should very much be ashamed of their behaviour.

Well, Madam Speaker, shame on them. Shame on them for putting time allocation on this bill. Shame on them for standing in this House not only a year ago saying how shameful it was for a government to do it and for doing the exact same thing they're doing now, and not only at one stage of a bill for a few hours but for all stages of this bill that they just implemented on Thursday, that they introduced and orally introduced. They didn't even give the opposition notification that it was coming. It is shameful; it is undemocratic. They should be completely ashamed of themselves, and they shouldn't be voting in favour of this.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 23 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:39 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Rutherford
Copping	Long	Schow
Ellis	Lovely	Schweitzer
Getson	McIver	Shandro
Glubish	Milliken	Smith
Goodridge	Nally	Toews
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Toor
Horner	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Jones	Panda	Yaseen
Kenney		

Against the motion:

Eggen	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Schmidt
Gray	Pancholi	Sweet
Hoffman		

Totals: For – 34 Against – 10

[Government Motion 23 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 9

Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments in relation to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you. I don't want to spend too much time speaking tonight because I'd like to give as much opportunity to all the members, particularly the Official Opposition, as they talk through committee . . . [interjection] Again, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, she'll have her chance to take the floor, but this behaviour that we continue to see from the opposition is actually what I want to quickly talk about as it relates to Bill 9.

Mr. Kenney: Quickly but not so quickly.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yeah. Exactly. Just to describe the opposition's behaviour when it comes to this legislation – you're right – could not happen quickly. It's quite ridiculous.

In particular, Madam Chair, as we watched the debate on the motion that just passed in this Chamber a few moments ago in relation to this, the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader rose in the Chamber and said a couple of things that need to be addressed when it comes to this bill, but the first, I think, that's interesting is that since 1990, I believe, there have never been three time allocations done on a piece of legislation.

First of all, Madam Speaker, I'd like to back up and make it clear that when it comes to second reading of Bill 9, there was no time allocation done on Bill 9. Those who were in the House last night will have seen what I'm about to describe, and those who may watch the Legislature, maybe the three or four people that watch the Legislature at about 3:30 in the morning . . . [interjection] You're right. Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora: you're right. There are a lot of people up in the gallery right now, and that's good. They should probably know what happened last night as well.

There was no time allocation motion moved. Not one. In fact, I rose at one point to make it clear that there would be no time allocation motion moved and that there was an opportunity for every member to speak. Interestingly enough, Madam Chair, do you know how many members of the Official Opposition spoke on second reading of Bill 9?

Mr. Kenney: How many?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Twenty-three of 24. Twenty-three of 24 spoke when it came to second reading of Bill 9.

Mr. Kenney: What about the 24th?

Mr. Jason Nixon: The 24th, interestingly enough, did not speak. They had an opportunity. We didn't have time allocation. In fact, nobody rose at that point to speak to the legislation, and they quietly

let it pass through the House. I was kind of shocked by that, taken aback by that. I thought that, certainly, they would go 24 for 24 given how much the opposition said they wanted to speak to this legislation.

Mr. Kenney: I guess they don't care.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yeah. They must not. But they got there, and they passed it.

Then they had the nerve to stand in this House today and say that we time allocated on second reading and that we're going to time allocate at all three stages of the bill when we had, in fact, not. In addition to that, they then said that it was the first time since 1990. I will draw your attention, Madam Chair – and this relates to Bill 9 because the primary argument from the Official Opposition in regard to Bill 9 that you're going to hear tonight and that we have heard for days is about the fact that they are not being allowed to debate the bill. They're spending their time when they're allowed to debate the bill arguing that they're not allowed to debate the bill. I can't even follow it.

But the point is – and, Madam Chair, you were in the Legislature with me when this happened. During Bill 6, which was certainly not in 1990, the then hon. Government House Leader moved . . .

Mr. Kenney: This was their attack on farmers?

8:00

Mr. Jason Nixon: This was the attack on farmers, yeah.

Let's recap that, too. That was a bill, Madam Chair, that was legislation attacking farm and ranch families that ultimately could have ended up in a situation, if we were not able to get an amendment passed inside this Chamber – thankfully, from the hard work of Albertans, not from anybody in this Chamber but from the hard work of Albertans who protested against the NDP's lack of consultation and their attack on farm and ranching families, we were able to get that amendment passed. But if we had not, kids weren't even going to be allowed to do 4-H anymore. That's what that legislation was.

The Government House Leader rose at that time – now he's left political life – Brian Mason, who was the Government House Leader for the . . .

Mr. Kenney: A good guy.

Mr. Jason Nixon: A good guy who had been the House leader for the NDP and a long-time leader.

He moved three of them – I can table them in Orders of the Day tomorrow, Madam Chair. He moved three time allocations on every stage of the bill – every stage of the bill – including second reading. Interestingly enough, do you know how much time he gave the opposition? One hour on each of the three time allocations. One hour on each of the time allocations.

So when it comes to Bill 9, which is the legislation that's before the House right now, I think it's important that we actually encourage all members of the House, particularly the Official Opposition, to actually talk about Bill 9, not spend their time talking about this important legislation and indicating that they haven't been allowed to speak to it when we know that Monday night this week we were in this Chamber until 3 o'clock in the morning giving the Official Opposition time to speak on it. Last night we were here until about 2:30 or so in the morning giving the Official Opposition time to speak on it. I suspect we'll be here tonight probably even later than that. We worked to make sure that the Official Opposition has all the time in the world to be able to speak on this legislation because they've indicated that that's important to them.

But what I want them to do – and I'm challenging them – as they work through Bill 9 is not to misrepresent the facts inside this Chamber. I think it takes away from the important argument when it comes to Bill 9 and the people that they say that they're representing when their members stand up inside this Chamber and make a comment in their speeches – and you can check *Hansard*, Madam Chair. This happened on Bill 9. They said: hey, the Government House Leader has made it so I can only speak for an hour on the bill, only one hour. When that person was rising, we were already at somewhere around 10 hours into the piece of legislation. It does a disservice to the people that you represent. It's not accurate, and it's not appropriate.

Mr. Kenney: It's not truthful.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Not truthful, if you will. It's shocking to me to continue to see the Official Opposition do that.

My point – and, again, this matters to Bill 9, Madam Chair. I will tell you why, because I can see that right now you're trying to say: hon. Government House Leader, get back to the legislation. I've seen that look before. But this does matter to Bill 9 for two reasons. One, this is the argument that the Official Opposition has put forward for days inside this Chamber, that I am refuting right now. Second, I suspect they'll keep doing it. I might be wrong. We'll see shortly whether I'm wrong or not, but I suspect that they will continue to do that.

Second, it goes to whether or not you can trust what the NDP have to say when it comes to this legislation. When their argument both in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber is to say that they were time allocated when they were not, that they were limited to one hour to speak when they were not, that their members were not allowed to speak when they were: that goes to their credibility when they talked about Bill 9. It goes to their credibility when they say that Bill 9 will be legislation that – and they say some horrible things about my friend the hon. Finance minister, that he has a bill in front of the House to pickpocket people. That's ridiculous, Madam Chair. It fits with Team Angry. It fits with their approach, the NDP. But can Albertans really trust the Official Opposition in their arguments when it comes to Bill 9 if they spend their time in this Chamber misrepresenting the facts and saying that things are happening that are easily provable have not happened?

You know, Madam Chair, I am a father of three children, and sometimes your kids come forward with some really bizarre things. Usually when they're in trouble, you see them and they say – I'm watching my little brother, the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein. He's, also, the father of four children, actually.

Mr. Kenney: He's not so little.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yeah. He's not so little; he's just littler than me. He has twins, like me, actually, Madam Chair. We both have twins. I've seen his twins. They come and stay at my house. They come and give you a sheepish look, and you know that they've been in trouble. You start to ask them questions, and then they come up with just the most bizarre stories sometimes because that's what kids do. And you know it's bizarre. That's kind of like what's happened here in the last couple of days, when the Official Opposition says that they've been time allocated when they have not been, that they're capped at one hour when they have not been. It's ridiculous.

The Chair: Hon. members, I am enjoying, very much so, the stories of family, but let's take some of your own advice and focus on Bill 9.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I agree, Madam Chair. I think it's important that we talk about Bill 9. The argument that the opposition has against Bill 9 and the fact that we are moving it through this legislation – they want it to stop – is that, essentially, the government of the day should not be allowed to move forward the agenda inside this House. As I've spoken about several times over the last few days – and so have the hon. Premier and a few others – this goes down to the lack of humility from the Official Opposition to stand inside this place and debate against a piece of legislation like Bill 9, that does nothing except give a little bit more time to make sure that we're able to get this right as we look at the absolute, devastating mess that was created by the Official Opposition when they were government.

We talk about my little brother from Calgary-Klein's twins and my twins. This party across from me was going to saddle them with \$100 billion worth of debt, and they have the nerve to stand in this House over and over and over and say shame on us because we're going to take the time to get it right, to try to get a path to balance for our province, for my little brother's kids, for my kids, and for all Albertans' kids. Shame on them, Madam Chair, I say, for what they were going to do to this House. Shame on them for standing against a reasonable approach to be able to get our finances in order. Shame on them. Shame on them for continuing to come to this Assembly, showing no humility for being fired by the people of Alberta, the only political party in the history of this province to be a one-term government, fired by Albertans.

Instead, their approach on stuff like Bill 9 is to come here, make things up, attack the hon. Finance minister for bringing forward reasonable legislation to try to get it right – to do what, Madam Chair? – to fix the mess they made. Thank goodness that we've got a Finance minister that's willing to take the time to get this right so that we can start to change the mess that they made. Nobody else could be held responsible for the mess that was made inside this province except for the NDP when they were in government. They made the mess. Now, Albertans put them in the time-out box. I suspect they're going to stay there for a while, particularly because they can't adjust to it. They still haven't realized what they did wrong: bring in a carbon tax at the same time as we had the largest unemployment in the history of our province, take us on track to \$100 billion in debt. [interjections]

You can hear them, Madam Chair. They can't stop.

Mr. Kenney: They're angry.

Mr. Jason Nixon: They're angry. Team Angry. That's all that they have when it comes to Bill 9, their anger. They've always been the party of fear and smear, Madam Chair. You know that, and I know that. But now they've taken it to a whole other level of angry. You know who they're angry at? And you'll see it in the debate tonight. Through you to my colleagues, who do you think that they're angry at? They're angry at Albertans. They should not be angry at Albertans. They should be angry at their leader, who took them down this path. They should be angry at themselves, their former cabinet, who took our province down the path of financial ruin. Now they stand in this House and filibuster and make things up and do whatever they do to try to stop the hon. Finance minister from using Bill 9 to be able to fix – to take the time just to be able to get this problem fixed so we can continue with the services that we need inside this province. It's sad.

Ms Renaud: Shame on us for protecting the law.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yeah. They said, "Shame on us for protecting the law."

You know, again, I'll tell you another thing, Madam Chair, through you to them. Shame on them for continuing to misrepresent the facts, for continuing to say that people inside this House are not obeying the law. It's shameful that that's even been allowed to continue in this House for as long as it has. I'm proud of our side of the House, that doesn't behave like that. They should try better. They should try better.

I just want to close with this, because I actually intended to get up for just a few brief moments, Madam Chair. You've got a party in opposition who want to spend their time talking about this legislation – and this legislation is relevant to what I'm saying: it's a three-page bill – and you know what they spent the majority of their time on when debating Bill 9? Calling division bells to try to adjourn debate so they could go home to bed.

8:10

I don't know about you, Madam Chair, but my constituents sent me up here to work. I'm happy to work as late as we need to to get the job done. I encourage the NDP to do that.

Then the next day they spent all their time inventing a time allocation that did not happen instead of coming back to the importance of Bill 9, which is the discussion about whether it's a relevant piece of legislation that makes sense to pause things, to give the Finance minister and the blue-ribbon panel some time to get this right – to do what, Madam Chair? – to fix the mess the NDP made. That's the entire job. That's what Albertans sent us here to do in record numbers.

I get how that probably hurts the NDP. I get that. It has to hurt to lose an election at that magnitude. I mean, go look at an electoral map, Madam Chair, and see what Albertans think about the NDP and their policies: not one seat in rural Alberta, where I come from – not one seat – and devastated in Calgary. Albertans spoke loud and clear that they don't like the direction the NDP went in. They don't like the mess the NDP created, and they gave this side of the House a clear, record-breaking mandate for the now hon. Premier, his government, and his Finance minister to come and do the job right.

If the hon. members want to spend their time talking about that tonight, I'm sure the hon. Finance minister would like to get up and discuss this legislation and how this would work with them, but if they want to continue this approach of just fear and smear through to the end, I suspect that we're going to spend some time together listening to some bizarre speeches because we respect the right of the opposition to speak. [interjections] Unlike the opposition, who don't respect my right to speak inside this Chamber, we will respect their right to speak inside this Chamber. We won't heckle, and we won't shut them down. We will go out of our way to make sure that they have an opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents. We just ask that they do it with respect, that they actually work on the piece of legislation, that they don't misrepresent the facts, and that they stand up and actually do what they're supposed to do for their constituents. That's it. That's all. That's pretty fair. And you know what, Madam Chair? I think that's what Albertans expect of them.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, hon. colleagues and Madam Chair. I am rising to speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. There are a few things I want to say in response to the comments just now raised by the Government House Leader. I have tremendous respect for our nonpartisan research staff here at the Legislature, including the library team. The library team did a very thorough review and

actually did one hundred per cent confirm that the only time, in easily searchable records, that they could find going back was in 1990, where in second reading calling the previous question occurred – some people call that closure; that’s sort of a colloquial term; calling the previous question, I guess, is the technical term – which the government brought forward, which does limit debate because it limits speaking ability to only one time each. You can’t bring forward amendments in second reading. I know these are all very technical things, but I think that they’re important for people to know. So it essentially does limit the amount of time on debate, and it does limit the ability for people to bring forward amendments because it says that you can’t. So facts.

I also want to clarify that absolutely every – first of all, oral notice was given late last week. The bill was actually introduced on Monday. It was well known that our leader would be speaking at a national conference in Toronto and, of course, tried very diligently to be back here. The fact that the Government House Leader drew attention to the fact that she wasn’t able to speak is an embarrassment towards him, I would say.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Chair: Point of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Jason Nixon: I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), Madam Chair, language to create disorder. We just watched the deputy leader of the NDP get up in this Chamber and say that I said that the Official Opposition leader was not able to speak and was not in the Chamber. I would not do that because it would be, first of all, against the rules to refer to an absence of a member, something that I would not do and, second, something the deputy leader just did to her own leader, which I don’t quite get. In addition, it’s not what I said.

Again, stick to the facts, and let’s get to debate on the bill.

The Chair: Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. Although I recognize that the member is using points of order now to start buying into our six hours of timed debate, same with using the 15 minutes he just used, how about we just focus on the debate? There is no point of order here. I would like to request, respectfully, to the Government House Leader that he respect our six hours of this debate.

The Chair: Hon. members, I suspect that Edmonton-Glenora has clarification on the matter.

Ms Hoffman: If he wants me to withdraw the remark, I am certainly able to do so, Madam Chair. I think it’s important to give context to the comments that were given in this House completely out of context. I’m happy to continue with my time. I would like to continue with my time, if that’s amenable to the table.

The Chair: Please proceed.

Debate Continued

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Of course, the fact that the bill was only introduced on Monday and here we are on Wednesday and the government is moving forward at breakneck speed when it was well known that our leader would have additional commitments I think is of importance. I think the fact that this bill, which attacks 180,000-plus workers, many of whom are very busy

– teachers are one of the groups that it attacks because it threatens their collective agreements. Of course, what’s happening this week? All of my teacher friends are talking about their last field trip, their last exam, their report cards, and getting ready for the summer. That’s what people who are very busy this time of year do, and the fact that the government has brought forward this bill that has damaging impacts on their collective agreement, that was legally negotiated, that has national protections, I think is something that shows that the way the government is behaving on this is, I would say, unbecoming.

When I did follow up with the library, I said: is there another time when notice has been given for other stages of the reading, while it was still in second, that there was notice given about closure? The result was that the only time closure, going back through the research, had been brought in – of course, the Premier, when I raised this in question period yesterday, said that there would be between 25 and 30 hours. So it sure sounds like the Premier has already decided how many hours of debate there will be for this, which implies that there will be closure at all three readings. The fact is that the last time that happened was in 1990, that the library was easily able to find, anyway.

What was happening in 1990? One of the bills that they did that to – they did it to two bills – was the sell-off of an important public asset, Alberta Government Telephones. This was something that was contentious, and the government responded in a ham-fisted way, much like the government today is responding. I want to say that I do not apologize for the comments that I gave. The response that the Premier gave I think speaks to the fact that he absolutely intends to follow through on the motion that the Government House Leader gave.

What I am simply pointing out is the fact that this has not happened in almost 30 years because it is so ham-fisted to have closure at all three stages, or to call the previous question, whatever vernacular you want to use, limiting the amount of debate. Why is that? It’s because this bill is about bargaining in bad faith. This bill is about breaking collective agreements, collective agreements that were ruled constitutionally as being workers’ entitlements. They sat down at the table in good faith and negotiated.

You know what? I know that the Government House Leader is an expert at revisionist history, but let’s review the facts again, which are that while the NDP held government in the last term, our partners in labour sat down at the table and struck very reasonable agreements, almost exclusively zeros, with us, right? They sat down at the table and said: “We get that it’s a difficult financial situation. Obviously, our members would like increases, but if we have certainty that our rights will be respected, that we can solve some local issues, things like the classroom improvement fund, if we can find ways to make sure that we have a number of zeros and then a wage reopener or binding arbitration, we will accept the zeros.” What the government today is doing is breaking those contracts by bringing forward this bill. It is breaking the law, and that’s why we will keep calling it as we see it, Madam Chair.

I have deep concern that this could result in labour unrest. I think that it will in turn result in compromised services and ultimately cost Albertans a lot more than just following the law, following the agreements, and going to an arbitrator. I think that that is something that is fair and reasonable. By negotiating in good faith, we did secure those deals for Albertans during tough economic times. We did that by working in a very respectful way with our partners in labour, the people who provide those services that the government is obligated to provide to the people of Alberta.

8:20

I know that we don’t do introductions anymore, but I want to note that there are a number of people in the gallery. I want to recognize

my long-time friend and co-worker John Vradenburgh, who is the CUPE 474 president, who's here to watch. CUPE 474: for the government's awareness, there are a number of different sectors that they represent, but the biggest one, the biggest area of membership, is custodians in public schools. These are the men and women who keep our schools safe and clean, who take care of the boiler systems, who make sure that when your kids – maybe the twins of the Government House Leader – lose a shoe up on the roof of the school, they can crawl up on the roof, get that shoe, and send it back down to those kids, right? Sometimes you kick a soccer ball and your shoe goes up on the roof. These are hard-working men and women who take care of our kids. When our kids show up at school every day and we say to our kids, "We expect you to do your best," it's custodians who are the first people that usually they see.

They definitely see the work of that custodian. In the middle of the winter it's the custodian who's at that school at the crack of dawn making sure the sidewalks are clean and safe. It's the custodian who makes sure that the school entrance is clean and welcoming. Kids know whether or not the people at the school are phoning it in or if they really mean it when they say: we expect you to do your best. To the custodians all across our province – specifically, John is on my mind right now through 474 – I want to say thank you. I think it's only fair that government treat the people that we expect to work and to do their best for kids in a fair and reasonable way. I think it's only fair that they not be railroaded into breaking the law, breaking the collective agreements that have been signed.

I also see Heather Smith, president of the United Nurses of Alberta. Nurses: again, another group that will be negatively impacted by this bill that is being moved through this House at such breakneck speed. Heather Smith, for the Government House Leader's awareness, has been the president of this local for many years and has probably seen labour unrest on more than one occasion but not in the last four years. Not in the last four years because we worked respectfully and collaboratively to make sure that we honoured nurses and the work they did. And what did nurses ask? They said: "We'll take zeros, but just put an opportunity to sit back down at the table in our contract." Right? "We deserve to sit back down at the table and continue to have a respectful relationship and get to a result that works for everybody."

When the government says that the NDP behaved in a way that set this province up for economic disaster, the government doesn't acknowledge the fact that it was the Conservative government that set most of the collective agreements that are at the rates we're at today, and it was an NDP government that sat down at the table and very respectfully worked with our front-line workers to make sure that they have an opportunity to continue working with government.

Obviously, this new government isn't interested in that. What's the first thing they did when they had a chance to show the working people of this province who work for the province, the public servants, the people on the front lines – you know, nurses, teachers, paramedics, and the sheriffs that keep this very building safe and make sure that our court systems run smoothly. I think they're one of the first ones that are due for arbitration. I think it was probably supposed to start next week. Maybe that's why this is moving at such breakneck speed, because when we have time for the sheriffs to sit down and have arbitration to have what they rightfully negotiated respected through their contract, the government can't move quickly enough to trample their rights and their ability to be heard.

Again, when the Government House Leader says, "Well, you say that you only have an hour," I want to refer to what was said by the Premier. Here's what I said, and here's what the Premier said. I said:

What the Premier is pushing his cabinet and caucus to do is cowardly. It's the epitome of unconstitutional, law-breaking infringement on the rights of teachers, nurses, paramedics, and front-line public service members.

And the Premier responded by saying: "There will be ample debate." Cue closure. Then the Premier goes on to say: "between 25 and 30 hours of debate. That's more than one hour for every member of the opposition." So the one-hour reference is referring to what was said by the hon. Premier. Again, that's a little bit of background and facts about what we're actually doing here today.

Why I think this is so frustrating – again, here we are debating a closure motion at 7:30 at night. It could have easily been debated in the middle of the day. We've been here for a good chunk of the day already. It could have been debated when the news broadcasts were happening. It could have been debated just after question period, after the daily Routine. But, no, the Government House Leader and the Premier chose to do it at 7:30 at night, and the time allocation will happen from 8 o'clock at night until – what is that? Like, a 2 in the morning time allocation, essentially? Not exactly peak watching of the House, watching what kind of tactics are being used by the government.

The other thing I want to mention, the other really interesting thing, is that Monday the bill gets introduced. Monday was also the day that the pipeline approval came through? Tuesday was the day the pipeline approval came through. Thank you very much, hon. members.

Again, people are either watching the news and hearing great news for our province about the pipeline approvals, which have been long overdue and we've been fighting for years to make happen, or they're marking their exams or they're doing the regular things that families do when they're heading into the summer season. I just think that the government can't move quickly enough. The last time a government acted in such a ham-fisted way was in 1990 with something so politically contentious as the sell-off of Alberta Government Telephones. Sorry; AGT.

Let's circle back. Today in question period we had a very good question from the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo about broadband and SuperNet and making sure that we have connectivity in the north. How is that possible? Of course, it would have been more possible if we actually had a public service through the telephone and through the Internet services. I just can't help but circle back to how pushing a harsh ideological practice of privatization and breaking collective agreements seems to be a recurring theme.

I imagine there will be other opportunities. We are in committee, and I imagine my colleagues will have some amendments at this stage since we are actually allowed at this stage to bring forward amendments. The government made it so we couldn't bring forward amendments at second reading. Certainly, I think it's important that we have an opportunity to hear from those colleagues about those important amendments.

I also wanted to say how much I appreciate – I know that it's a cold night; it's rainy – how many people are engaged and are here to witness what I hope becomes an open-minded debate.

I know the Government House Leader also said, "We're here, and we're going to pass this," sort of presupposing what's going to happen, how the caucus is going to vote. I imagine he probably has a pretty good idea, but I do want to remind the caucus that in no way was bargaining in bad faith part of the platform. In no way. When the Premier very happily stood up as a candidate, a leadership candidate, with a nurse and a paramedic who were candidates, I doubt he actually said to them before they signed their nomination papers: PS, we're going to break your collective agreements. Right? Like, I doubt he actually said to these lovely candidates: we're

going to trample on your rights, and if you aren't successful and you end up back working in the jobs you have now, we're going to break your collective agreements. I doubt that was something that was said to those candidates. It definitely wasn't something that was said in any of the campaign literature or any of the ads that we saw. It certainly wasn't something that the government was open and honest about with the people of Alberta.

Here they are – it's only Bill 9, right? Here we are so early in their mandate, a mandate that could bring about a number of other things. I remember there being things in their platform about midwifery. I remember there being things in their platform about rural health care. We're not here debating that. That was actually in the platform. Instead, we're here debating a bill about breaking collective agreements and bargaining in bad faith. I think that is certainly not the track record that the Government House Leader should probably be mapping out for his caucus. But that's what we've got tonight.

With that, I will cede my time, hopefully to my colleagues, and we will have an opportunity to continue this important debate and consider amendments. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Hon. members, before we proceed with any further debate, I would just like to express some caution as we proceed with tonight's debate that we stick to the bill that we are debating, that we refrain from discussing closure or any other thing that does not have anything to do with the bill at hand, which is Bill 9. I hope we are in agreement.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Standing Order 13(2): clarification on your ruling. We just watched the opposition speak for 20 minutes during the Bill 9 debate, with no opposition from the chair. Are we not going to be allowed to respond to that?

Second, I do think the opposition feels this is part of this legislation. I'm not really understanding your ruling.

The Chair: Hon. Government House Leader, I'd be happy to explain my suggestion that I made earlier. I might point out that we've now had one speaker from the government and one speaker from the opposition that both may have had a lot of leniency given when it came to the topic at hand, the bill.

8:30

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I will be happy to, then, rise and talk – I will try to stay away from the closure arguments given by the deputy leader of the NDP Party.

Ms Sweet: Point of order. Sorry, hon. member and Madam Chair. I didn't get a chance to respond to the 13(2), so I just wanted to . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I apologize, but that is up to the discretion of the chair. On 13(2) I explained my ruling.

Ms Sweet: You didn't give our side an opportunity to even engage.

The Chair: That's to the discretion of the chair to have additional voices. Would you like to call something else?

Ms Sweet: Okay. Well, then, I'll call it again, 13(2). Please explain to me why the opposition doesn't have a chance to respond to this ruling and give us more detail as to why we can't talk to time allotment.

Point of Clarification

The Chair: Hon. members, I'm not sure what you want to debate here tonight. Bill 9 is on the Order Paper. I am simply ensuring that that is what is being debated here in this House. That is the ruling that I made, that's the ruling that I explained, and that is how we're going to continue on with debate this evening.

Hon. Government House Leader, would you please continue your portion of debate.

Debate Continued

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, then, I will stay away from time allocation, take your advice, Madam Chair. It was, frankly, what I indicated in my opening remarks. Hopefully, we can get to there.

I would like to just talk about another issue that was raised by the deputy leader of the NDP, and that's this whole concept of this not being in the United Conservative Party platform. First of all, Madam Chair, through you to that hon. member, that's pretty rich coming from a member that belonged to a government just a few short weeks ago that ran an entire campaign and did not tell Albertans about their plan to bring in the largest tax increase in the history of the province, then got elected without telling them that, and then came in and brought in the largest tax increase in the history of the province.

The reality is, though, that when it comes to Bill 9, our platform was clear that we were running on getting our province on a path to balance. That's all that Bill 9 is about. The Finance minister I know will talk about this a little bit later. This is about giving the Finance minister the opportunity to be able to slow things down to be able to understand exactly where the fiscal situation is.

The opposition left this province in an absolute dire situation: on track for a hundred billion dollars in debt, devastated the finances of this province, sat on their hands and did nothing for the hard-working people of this province as they underwent the largest unemployment in the history of this province, sat back as communities that I represent – the former Education minister is laughing as we talk about this. I don't laugh when I think about communities like Drayton Valley or Rocky Mountain House, who were decimated under the NDP's regime. Decimated. That's not an exaggeration. Go to Drayton Valley and see what your policies did to that community, Madam Chair, through you to them.

Our platform was to fix that. That's what we're going to do inside this place. The NDP can try to slow that down as much as they want. They can make the arguments that they want to make. That's their right inside this place. But to rise inside this House and say that this is not part of our platform, that it is not part of our platform to be on a path to balance, to get our finances back in order is a ridiculous argument, Madam Chair. Read the platform. I have it here. I have, like, two or three copies if the hon. members across the way would like to have a copy of it. There's some good stuff inside it. That's what we ran on.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. He often has things to say inside this House sometimes when he stands up, more often when he's yelling them across the way and interrupting other speakers. But he often has stuff to say. I'd like him to rise and see what he thinks about the comments of his deputy leader and the fact that he was part of a government who decimated the finances of this province, putting us in a situation where we had to evaluate the situation, take the time to get it right. Do you know why? The hon. Finance minister has done a good job of talking about this, as has the Premier. It's because of jobs that we have to do this. It's because of the services that Albertans depend on. It's because of the mess that the NDP made. What this bill comes down to at its core is about

the NDP's absolute fiscal mismanagement, and that's why you see Bill 9 on the floor today.

Now, I have a lot more to say about the misrepresentation of facts when it comes to the time process that's happening in this House, but, Madam Chair, I will eagerly await to see if the NDP will respect your ruling. But if they continue to rise inside this House and misrepresent facts, we will continue to rise, even though it's eating into their time, to clarify those facts.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to stand to speak against Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, an act that through debate many have already pointed out numerous flaws in. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill once more because it is such an egregious abuse of power and because it is attacking our front-line workers, the public servants who deliver important services, who are our friends and family, who are our neighbours, who are our visitors in the gallery this evening. These are the people that this bill is directly attacking in a gross abuse of power with a legislative hammer that is going to break legally binding contracts with public-sector workers who are in wage talks right now.

The government's motives to do this and to do it at a very quick pace appear to be tied with the fact that there is arbitration actively happening, actively scheduled to make sure that our public-sector workers are – after having gone through mediation and proper negotiation with our government, after having created contracts or collective agreements that included a wage reopener, this government is now trying to break that process. This is problematic for a number of different reasons.

When a collective agreement is signed, when a contract is signed, when an agreement between two parties is entered into, we expect both parties to uphold that. This bill is the government breaking contracts and not upholding its part of the bargain. It is disrespecting workers, it is disrespecting the collective bargaining process, which is very important, and it is putting us on a very dangerous path because our public-sector workers, all workers, deserve our respect. They deserve our respect, and when workers do not get the respect that they deserve, when they are not treated with respect, well, that's when workers start thinking about what their options are: potentially withdrawing services, job action, looking for other jobs, leaving the province, perhaps.

We all deserve to be treated with respect at all times, particularly in an employment situation, and this government is not doing that. Bill 9, which breaks the law – and many lawyers have already weighed in that this is unconstitutional. It will be taken to court – we've already seen that in the media – and could end up costing our government and our coffers more in the long run, which has happened in other jurisdictions. We've seen in B.C. in 2002 that the government reached in, broke that collective bargaining process with teachers. It took many years to resolve, and it ended up costing not just the B.C. government, but it cost the kids of that province in lesser services until this was resolved and negotiated, and the NDP government there has had to take that on.

At my last opportunity to speak to Bill 9 I made a very deliberate point of reading into the record the voices of Albertans, people who were horrified, people who were hurt, people who felt disrespected, people who were worried about what was happening with their employment situation, what would happen with their salaries, because they're concerned about what a government that would do this may do to them. It was important for me to read those voices into the record because so many Albertans have not been heard through this process. So many Albertans have not had the

opportunity to consider what Bill 9 is and what it might mean for them. We are now at a point where we have a limited amount of time to have that conversation with Albertans.

We know that this bill impacts nearly 200,000 workers, including nurses, social workers, teachers, the sheriffs who guard our Legislature and who are here working with us and will be staying here late into the night as we debate this piece of legislation, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, librarians, custodians, correctional officers. The number of people this impacts is enormous, the variety of jobs and services they provide.

8:40

But one thing they all have in common is that a lot of these workers have worked collaboratively with the previous government at the negotiating table to negotiate agreements that both parties were able to work with, to live with, and for a lot of these workers that meant taking zeros. That's what got negotiated at the table by both parties because our Alberta public service workers, our partners, understood what was happening in our province, and we dealt with them in a fair way. We found alternative ways to negotiate to make sure that there were agreements. I know that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-North West, when he was the Minister of Education, introduced the classroom improvement fund, representing roughly 400 teachers, so although teachers at the negotiating table were able to negotiate and took zeros, other supports, other changes were provided.

This type of strong working relationship, of treating each other as partners, looking each other in the eyes, and negotiating is how collective bargaining is supposed to work, but this government is ignoring all of that at their own peril and at the peril of our Alberta public services, at the peril of service delivery within our province. Not only that; my fear is that this could lead to labour unrest, that this could lead to service disruptions, that this could lead to workers leaving the province. It could lead to a number of very negative impacts when we could have negotiated in good faith with them.

Now, this government in various remarks has used the term "good faith," which I do not believe they fully understand. They've used the term "respect," respect for workers and at times respect for the opposition, but, again, in both cases actions do not match their words. So making sure that we try to raise as much attention as we can to Bill 9 and the negative impacts it could have in our province is incredibly important.

Now, there's a particular section within Bill 9 that through the debate tonight we will have an opportunity to discuss, and that is section 5(c), which provides the government with the power to create regulations on any matter that they consider "necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act." These are very broad powers. These are powers that give the government the ability to write regulations on anything respecting the intent of this act. Madam Chair, how do we define what the intent of this act is? The preamble. And the preamble of this particular bill, the preamble which would bind the powers, those regulation-making powers, speaks about commitment to balancing the budget, speaks about "public sector compensation [being] the largest government expenditure," speaks about the blue-ribbon panel and its recommendations, and speaks in such language that the government could easily use that boundary to write regulations to roll back wages, to implement wage freezes, and to further impact that collective bargaining process with our public-sector unions. I have a great deal of concern about the bill as a whole, as I've outlined, and about that particular section.

We know that this legislation would apply to 24 collective agreements, including several where arbitrations have already begun. In today's *Edmonton Journal* there is an important story

drawing attention to the fact that there is an arbitration decision deadline that may be prompting the government to ram through the wage delay bill because there's arbitration that is scheduled to happen on Friday and Saturday of this week where the union involved, AUPE, "will argue that 23,000 front-line government employees deserve raises." Now, at that same table, Madam Chair, the government would also make its argument on economic factors, the current state of the economy, the current fiscal picture of Alberta. The information described in this preamble would all be things that the government would bring to make its arguments as well. That is the process by which an arbitrator would review all of the factors and issue a decision.

The article goes on to say that "the arbitrator could make a ruling as soon as Friday," and it includes some quotes from AUPE President Guy Smith: "That's why they're ramming it through . . . They don't want an independent third party, based on facts, to make a decision (about) front-line workers. I find that really quite disgraceful."

The government introducing a bill to break negotiated agreements with unions by delaying arbitration on wages until after October 31 is unconstitutional. It does a disservice to our public-sector workers, to Albertans. Again I will remind you that we are talking about our friends. We are talking about our family in many cases. I have family who work in the Alberta public service. We are talking about our neighbours. They live in all of the communities in Alberta because they serve every community in Alberta in so many ways.

On Monday night, while we debated this bill, members of Executive Council were on social media thanking front-line responders for helping to evacuate wildfire-impacted communities. That's a really great thank you. Thank you for helping to protect families and homes. We're going to stop your arbitration. We're going to reach into your collective bargaining process, and possibly we might do some wage rollbacks later because we've given ourselves the power to do that.

The disconnect: I suspect that those social media posts were sent from this Chamber while we debated Bill 9. Not being able to make the connection between these front-line responders, between the people we work with day in and day out, between the people who work to provide these ministers with the information they need to make sound decisions and the people this bill impacts is disconcerting to me, Madam Chair.

When contracts were originally negotiated in good faith by coming to the bargaining table and working together as partners, members of the public service agreed to multiple years of frozen wages in return for the ability to negotiate a wage increase in the final year of the contract. That's where we are today. To have that taken away from them is disrespectful, very upsetting. We have a lot of agitated public workers, and they have every right to be.

Interestingly enough, I had the opportunity to listen to someone in the labour relations community who was one of the mediators who helped negotiate this, and he felt that his reputation when he helped mediate this agreement was now impacted by the fact that the government has gone back on a contract, on a collective agreement that was duly negotiated at the bargaining table.

The clause that I referred to earlier, section 5(c): I do want to speak about that briefly. I believe that should the government stand to talk about clause 5(c), one of the things they would say is that this is commonly used, that this is a clause that we use all the time. That is not correct. It is a clause that can be put into legislation, but I can tell you from my four years in a government caucus that it is never lightly added to a piece of legislation. I had multiple discussions over different pieces of legislation when this clause was

used, and in many cases it was removed because it was seen to be too powerful or inappropriate.

In this case not only is this clause used but the preamble which defines the intent of this act is so broad that it could be used to do anything. Now, when the government gives itself regulation-making powers on the local food act, then the government can make some regulations within the boundaries of a bill that is about supporting our local agricultural producers, on a bill that is about local food. When the government puts the clause into Bill 9 and defines its intent as "public sector compensation is the largest government expenditure," that's something entirely different. Now, I understand that the Minister of Finance has created a social media clippable video, saying that they would not use this to do wage rollbacks. My question to the members of the government would be: if you're not going to use it, then why is it there? That type of a catch-all clause allowing regulations to be made can create unexpected and unintended consequences.

8:50

Mr. Eggen: Oh, I don't think it's unintended.

Ms Gray: Or intended consequences, as a member of my caucus has just pointed out.

The Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, the bad-faith bargaining bill, is a bad piece of legislation, Madam Chair. This is one that takes away our workers' rights, that disrespects the workers of this province, claims that it is only a delay but gives itself regulation-making powers that are far-reaching and inappropriate in this case unless the government can provide a convincing argument for why they are necessary. It is specifically designed to interfere with an arbitration, with multiple arbitrations, but specifically we have one that was scheduled to happen later this week. Union leaders have called the bill an egregious attack on the collective bargaining rights of all of these workers: government employees, nurses, teachers, health professionals, and others.

Now, when I talk about section 5(c), you don't need to just take my word for it. We've had it checked with multiple lawyers, who agree with our interpretation of how this could be used. In fact, our Alberta Federation of Labour president, Gil McGowan, said on Wednesday that a clause in Bill 9 could give the government the power to cut public worker wages without requiring legislation or negotiation. Another well-respected member of the labour relations community said that this fundamental loss of trust in the Kenney government is one consequence of this very bill.

The Chair: Hon. member, I caution against the use of names in the Assembly.

Ms Gray: Oh, my apologies. That trips me up when I read things. Thank you, Madam Chair.

It bodes very poorly for the future of labour relations, and I agree with that concern wholeheartedly, Madam Chair.

So we find ourselves here, Wednesday night, starting a debate on a critically important piece of legislation, on which, I would submit, Albertans have not had proper opportunity to be consulted because the government did not talk about freezing arbitration or delaying arbitration throughout the election. They did not talk about breaking collective agreements or breaking contracts. This bill was introduced with oral notice exactly seven days ago. They did not give the opposition notice that this bill was coming. Normally the government would give the opposition and the press gallery: here is our agenda for the session. They did give us an agenda. This wasn't on it. A surprise bill intended to interrupt collective bargaining and then time allocated.

Madam Chair, it's really important to me that I repeat one more time that we are talking about friends, neighbours, family, the people we know and work with each and every day when we debate this bill, the sheriffs who are here protecting this building, the nurses that we see when we need help, the child mental health therapists who help the children in our communities.

I am not supporting Bill 9, and I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say on this bill as well as we continue to debate this, and I will be introducing amendments at a later time in the debate.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Madam Chair, we're back on talking about time allocation. The hon. member spent some time talking about the fact that the opposition was not informed about this legislation, that it was not something that was provided. That, in fact, is not true. I'm not saying that the hon. member is being untruthful; she may not have been informed by her Opposition House Leader, and that would be unfortunate if that's the case. I, through you to her, Madam Chair, would suggest she take that up with her House leader if that's the case. But that is not true. The opposition was fully informed of all of the legislative agenda of the government, including this bill. The Government House Leader, that's myself, and the Opposition House Leader had a meeting about our agenda, no different than what the NDP did when in government and I was the Opposition House Leader. That's a standard process. We exchange what the legislative agenda will look like for the upcoming sitting.

Now, from time to time – and the NDP did the same – occasionally, bills are added to that list, and then you contact the other side's House leader to inform them of that legislation. I want to, Madam Chair, through you to the entire House, assure the House that I did that. It's one of our goals, to always treat the opposition with respect when it comes to legislation. Again, the hon. member may not be aware, but her House leader was informed. It would be incumbent upon him at that point to inform their caucus. That's how the process is. This is not a secretive bill.

There's another issue that I'd point out in the same context, Madam Chair, and it was brought up by the member. The member brought up that this bill was magically tabled on Monday under some conspiracy theory, that we knew on this side of the House that Trans Mountain would be approved on Tuesday, the next day, and that this would somehow stop the press from covering this legislation, that this was some great secret. The reality, though, is that this bill was tabled on the Thursday, so four days before the hon. member says.

The point is that this is the problem. When it comes to everything the NDP is doing right now but particularly on this piece of legislation, they continue to misrepresent the facts of what took place in regard to this legislation. I can go through dozens of facts tonight. Even after I opened up debate on Bill 9 and pointed out that that party, when they were in power just a few short years ago, on Wednesday, December 9, 2015, while debating Bill 6, the farm safety act, the then hon. Government House Leader, Mr. Mason – I hope he's enjoying his retirement. If he's up watching us in Kelowna; I don't know what he's doing.

Mr. Kenney: From his vineyard? I doubt it.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I doubt it. But just in case he is: I hope you're enjoying your retirement, Brian.

He moved the following:

Oral notice having been given, Hon. Mr. Mason to propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that, when further consideration of Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the Bill in Second Reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the Bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

An Hon. Member: How much time?

Mr. Jason Nixon: One hour. One hour.

I could read again; I won't, Madam Chair.

Mr. Eggen: Madam Chair, point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

The Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, your point of order.

Mr. Eggen: In regard to your previous comments about using this very limited time that we've had imposed upon us through closure, through the heavy-handedness of this government, you did, I think, very magnanimously suggest that we use the short amount of time to debate Bill 9. Clearly, the Government House Leader is abusing and circumventing that wise advice, taking up time talking about things that are only, you know, vaguely connected to anything, really, in this House, much less Bill 9. I would suggest, please, if you could redirect the debate back to why we're here in the first place.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, I'll respond to that.

To be clear, Madam Chair, I rose to rebut the deputy leader of the NDP earlier. You made a ruling, which I respected. I moved away from time allocation and went to a couple of other things that the deputy leader brought up, and I yielded the floor in respect of your ruling. Since then I've been listening, and repeatedly, including with the last member, time allocation is being discussed, accusations are being made against this side of the House and the government that are misrepresenting facts, that, frankly, are not true, discussions about whether or not they were informed about the bills, those types of things.

9:00

Let me be clear. I will continue to rise and rebut misrepresented facts from the opposition. If they don't want to use their time on this bill to misrepresent facts inside this House, I will continue to rise and rebut them. I can either do it during debate or I'll do it on points of order over and over, but they will be rebutted. Again, through you, Madam Chair, to them, I suggest that they stick to the bill if they want to spend their time on it, but every time that they rise and misstate a fact, I will rise again and clarify it because I think it's important that House knows the facts.

The Chair: Hon. Government House Leader, I think it's fair to offer a rebuttal to comments that are made. I would suggest that they be as brief as possible in doing so.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Standing Order 13(2), Madam Chair, to get clarification on the ruling: is that how it will be for both sides?

The Chair: Of course, that is how it will be for both sides.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Good. Thank you.

Debate Continued

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining act. I'd like to take a moment first to actually confirm something that the Government House Leader said, which is that, yes, you know, the day before oral notice was given to this House of the introduction of Bill 9, I do believe the Government House Leader did inform the Opposition House Leader that, quote, a labour bill would be introduced that would make us set our hair on fire. So one can only assume that the characterization . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader. A point of order.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). I'll focus primarily on language to create disorder though there are a few other standing orders I could use in this case. The hon. member is now attempting to refer to a conversation that she was not part of and, again, putting forward a timeline that she's incorrect about. The opposition was informed that legislation of this magnitude would be coming more than one day before, certainly several. I don't have the exact date in front of me. I certainly do not believe I said anything about lighting hair on fire. I would be very concerned about my friend the deputy House leader the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays if was anybody was lighting their hair on fire. He only has so much left. Again I would encourage the opposition not to misstate facts inside this House.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, I don't see any point of order here at all. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is simply setting up the debate that she will very methodically deliver in regard to Bill 9 and the drama and the facts that have taken place around Bill 9 from the time that we first heard of it, which was scarcely a week ago, to when it is scheduled to terminate through this ham-fisted time allocation, sometime in the early morning hours of Thursday. I would be so happy to hear her continue with what I'm sure will be a most illuminating analysis.

The Chair: Again I will add some caution when we're talking about a decision that has already been made in this House in regard to time allocation. This is just clearly a dispute of the facts, who may or may not have been part of conversations. No one really knows.

Please proceed with caution, hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Debate Continued

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased that the rules around hearsay do not apply in the House, and the hon. Government House Leader should be aware of that.

This is to set up the characterization of how this act was introduced in the House. I don't intend to speak to the issues the chair has already ruled on. But it goes again to the fact that this government has introduced this bill because it has a complete disregard for Alberta workers. That is why it was introduced. In fact, it is a clear disregard for the collective agreements that were

appropriately negotiated between the parties to all these agreements. There might have been some intent to actually break them and to do that, and that's why they've introduced the bill that they've introduced. The characterization by the hon. Government House Leader, I think, speaks to the disdain with which this government is treating Alberta workers.

It's something that I've highlighted a number of times already in this House when I've spoken on other issues and when I've had the opportunity to speak to this bill the first time, that for some reason this government seems to have a complete disdain for the public-sector workers who deliver the public services that all Albertans rely upon. We've heard numerous times that the workers that they're challenging right now by breaching those collective agreements are the people who deliver our front-line services. They are nurses, they are teachers, and they are librarians. They are food inspectors, child mental health therapists. They are long-term care workers, correctional officers, sheriffs. These are not people that we need to disregard or that we should treat with disdain. These are Alberta workers. A government that campaigns on a platform of caring about jobs seems to still have very deep, deep, deep disdain for the people who actually perform those jobs. They seem to only care about them if they're private-sector workers.

Well, we care about the private sector as well, which is why we stood up in this House and talked about the disdain that this government was showing for workers in the oil and gas sector who work overtime, for minimum wage employees, for young workers. You know, jobs come with people attached to them. They come with people who need to put food on the table, who collectively bargain in good faith with their employers and with the government, and they expect those collective agreements to be upheld. I don't know why this government insists on treating Albertans with this disdain.

So if we're going to talk a little bit about the details of the bill – we've talked about in this House the fact that introducing this legislation is unconstitutional. I know that there is a great desire for the government caucus to engage in as many lawsuits as possible. We see that they like to keep lawyers employed, and, you know, as somebody who worked in private practice, I can say that I'm sure there are a lot of my former colleagues who will be thrilled by this government's agenda because it's going to keep a lot of them employed for a very long time. That's exactly what this government is doing. Apparently, the only workers that they really care about are lawyers, and, hey, as a lawyer I'd say thank you except that now I have a very significant role, which is to stand up for all Alberta workers, not just lawyers, in this House. But they seem to be dead set on setting this government down the path of repeated lawsuits.

Let me talk a little bit about the law, because I don't know if the government has considered the law at all. They seem to have callously and very recklessly introduced this legislation with the intent to bring on the ire of the opposition members but, clearly, also to trigger the ire of organized labour in this province. So let's talk a little bit about the law. It's very important that the government realize that while they think they have a large mandate, the Supreme Court of Canada still sets the law of the land for this province and will rule out governments who are acting unconstitutionally.

In 2007, Madam Chair, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in Health Services and Support – Facilities Subsector Bargaining Assn. versus British Columbia that the right to collective bargaining under section 2(d) of the Constitution protects the right to good-faith bargaining and that governments will be held to account, just as employers are, when they bargain in bad faith. They set out the requirements that governments must be held to when they're introducing legislation that affects collective agreements. They talked about how that duty to bargain in good faith includes an

obligation to meet, to commit time to the process, and to engage in meaningful dialogue that is aimed at arriving at an acceptable agreement. This lies at the heart of the collective bargaining process.

In that decision by the Supreme Court the court stated that with respect to legislation introduced by governments to affect collective agreements, the court confirmed that legislation must as well conform to section 2(d) of the Charter and is void under section 52 of the Constitution Act if it does not comply with section 2(d).

So let's go back to what's at the heart of that right to bargain in good faith that is set out by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court says that section 2(d) of the Charter, which is freedom of association, does not protect activity that is a substantial interference with associational activity. If it affects the associational activity, it must not discourage the collective pursuit of common goals. "It is enough if the effect of the state law or action is to substantially interfere with the activity of collective bargaining, thereby discouraging the collective pursuit of common goals." I want to clarify because the Supreme Court actually talked about this and said that there doesn't need to be intent by the government to actually substantially interfere. It's just enough that there's an effect. But in this case I think we see both. We see an intent to substantially interfere and an effect.

The court stressed in that decision that "the right to bargain collectively protects not just the act of making representations, but also the right of employees to have their views heard in the context of a meaningful process of consultation and discussion," and that means that they should be able to rely upon the collective agreements that they negotiate.

The Supreme Court also stated that laws or state actions that prevent or deny meaningful discussion and consultation about working conditions between employees and their employer may substantially interfere with the activity of collective bargaining, as may laws that unilaterally nullify significant negotiated terms in existing collective agreements. That is exactly what we are seeing here. We have a number of collective agreements that have already been agreed to, that have been in place for a number of years, that have a wage arbitration provision in them. This is what was agreed to by the parties at the table, and this government is breaking those agreements. They are substantially interfering with the negotiating process and the collective agreements that have already been settled.

9:10

It is an important aspect of good-faith bargaining in a collective agreement situation that all parties mutually respect the commitments that they have entered into. If the content of bargaining shows hostility from one party toward the collective bargaining process, this will constitute a breach of the duty to bargain in good faith.

This is why, Madam Chair, it is important how this bill was introduced. It is important because it shows that there is a lack of commitment, that there is an intent here to undermine the collective agreement process, and that they are breaching the agreements that were rightfully and lawfully entered into by the parties of these collective agreements. This government is doing that intentionally, and the process by which they've done it is important, the fact that they did not campaign on this mandate. It was not part of their platform that they would breach or alter collective agreements. It is key to know that that is what they're trying to do here. They did not give notice to Albertans that they were trying to breach their collective agreements. They simply did it, and they did it under cover of night. They did it with next to no notice. They did it by limiting debate. That's all important to the fact that it goes to the

intent of why it was done. It was done because they're trying to ram it through quickly, and they're trying to do it as fast as possible. As the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods said, they might actually also be doing it to get around the arbitration provisions that are coming forward right now.

I think it is very important that – you know, the Government House Leader wants to talk about the legislation. He wants to talk about the bill. That is why the context around how the bill was introduced is so important. I don't know that the Government House Leader is listening to the important constitutional provisions that we're talking about. Again, I think there is a very strong desire to enter into as many lawsuits as possible. For a government that its platform is on fiscal responsibility, I wonder how responsible it is for Albertans' dollars to be used in lawsuits rather than in delivering public services and maintaining their commitment to the public-sector workers who provide those services every day.

I look at the opposition members. We all know people in the public sector who work. I wonder how the Member for Calgary-North would feel about the fact that teachers in his riding might take collective agreement action. They might take strike action because their wage negotiations are going to be interfered with. How would his constituents feel about a disruption in the delivery of education in their schools for that reason? How would the Minister of Education feel about that? I'm not sure we'd hear much from her about that. I wonder how each member in this House would feel if in their constituency their constituents were not getting the public services that they are owed, that they deserve, that they need because their caucus has decided to bring forward a breach of collective agreements and are causing significant labour unrest.

One of the things that I'm very proud of coming into this government, not having been part of it for the last four years, was to watch particularly the work of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. She did such a fantastic job working with unions, listening carefully, being a fantastic representative of government, of public-sector workers and public services but also doing it in a responsible way. She worked collaboratively with them. That is why, during a time of significant financial strain, with the drop in oil prices in this province, we did not have labour unrest. We did not have slashing and burning of government services. I think all Albertans, public-sector workers in particular, understood our responsibility in a time of economic difficulty to come together and do what was right for this province. Now this government is going to reward those employees, those workers, those public-sector workers who deliver these services to our province, by breaking those collective agreements.

I think it's important to note that the government keeps mentioning: "This is just a small bill. It's just a few clauses. It's just delaying it for four months." We have not heard a commitment from the Minister of Finance that there will actually be arbitration at the end of this time period put forward by Bill 9. There is no commitment. Frankly, I don't think that many public-sector workers will have much faith that that arbitration is going to come. We know what's happening. The government has been telling us for weeks – actually, they've been telling us for months about what they're going to do. They've been laying the groundwork through the Mackinnon panel, through the statements that we heard in this House about, oh, how much we spend on education, how much we spend on health care. They're laying the groundwork for significant cuts. Would they have any faith that there would be fair bargaining coming at the end of Bill 9's expiration? I don't think so.

I think it's also fair to say, as the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods pointed out, that this piece of legislation has one of those really tricky, convenient clauses that allows for the drafting of

regulations with a very broad regulation-making authority. Given that there should be no faith by Albertan workers in this government, I don't think we can have any faith that they would pass regulations that would be in the best interest of public-sector workers. We know that they'll be passing regulations that will continue to undermine the public services delivered by public-sector workers in this province.

I think we have a significant issue, and this deserves a significant debate because this government is trying to ram this through quickly. They've already made their decision with the MacKinnon panel. They gave clear direction that they're not to talk about opportunities to raise new revenues from tax increases, so where are those extra revenues going to come from? It's going to come from cutting services and cutting public-sector employee wages. This is clearly part of a pattern. We see what's coming, we anticipate it, we should be outraged, and we should be talking about it.

If the Government House Leader and the government caucus is not going to listen to public-sector employees, I know I am, and I know that my colleagues in this House are. I listened to them when I was on the doorsteps in Edmonton-Whitemud talking to constituents who were saying: thank you for not cutting our jobs. There are a significant number of public-sector workers in my riding, and they said: thank you for not cutting my job and not cutting the services to my family in a time of economic downturn. But somehow that is not appreciated by this government. They don't appreciate that. They're dead set on hurting Albertans and hurting the Albertans who work in those sectors even more than they are right now.

I think it's very significant that we talk about these things and we talk about the fact that this government is sending us down a path of considerable labour unrest in this province, considerable constitutional legal challenges, and that's not going to serve any of us well. All that's going to do is waste our time. It's going to upset Albertan workers. It's going to upset our services to our families and to our households, and it's only going to create a lot of money for lawyers.

I'm completely baffled by how this government claims to campaign on a platform of fiscal responsibility, yet all they want to do is blow our money on gambles, gambles on a \$4.5 billion gift in the corporate tax cut, a gamble that we've shown numerous times is not supported by research. There's plenty of research to talk about how that does not create jobs, but they're going to gamble that way. They're going to gamble our climate change future on the fact that, oh, well, you know, we'll challenge the federal carbon tax in court even though that challenge has already been defeated at the provincial level, but we'll just launch lawsuits. Now they're saying that we're going to gamble on our public service delivery, on our public service workers by breaching collective agreements. We'll just take a gamble that. We'll go to court and deal with it there.

I don't think that that's fiscal responsibility, and I think, quite frankly, all Albertans should be ashamed of that because we deserve a government with a plan, a plan to actually invest in our public service workers, a plan to invest in our public services and invest in things such as climate change and invest in things such as actually creating jobs rather than just hoping that by cutting taxes, somebody will come and create jobs here.

This government has not shown that it has done its research. It clearly has not done its research on the constitutional laws around freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and bargaining in good faith. As somebody who used to work in public service, I feel a little bit of compassion for the lawyers who work in Alberta Justice who are now going to have to spend their time defending this because that's really all they're going to be doing.

They're going to be defending ourselves or perhaps leading challenges in court, and that's just wasting our public service dollars.

I'm, frankly, sorry that the Government House Leader seems so disdainful toward the opposition and the fact that we stand up and we will continue to stand up for the fact that this is something that we need to do. I know that the Government House Leader requires a great deal of attention every time he enters the room. He's looking for some attention right now as well. But we will certainly continue to advocate for Alberta workers because this government is not only not going to advocate for them; they're trying to hurt them. I myself am not going to stand for that. That's not my job. I was elected here to look out for Albertans, both who hold those jobs and who receive the services from our public-sector workers.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Others wishing to speak? Any other members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mountain View – Calgary. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

9:20

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You almost moved me a little north.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I'm pleased to rise as well and speak on this bill. I think my colleague before me from Edmonton-Whitemud has done an amazing job of laying out some of the primary objections to this bill, laying out the ways in which it violates the Constitution. I think I could belabour that point at length because it does violate the Constitution. I think that we should all be concerned about that because we're not talking about – you know, we talk about the Constitution, and for some of us that document holds an enormous amount of weight. Fundamentally what we're talking about when we're talking about the Constitution is those fundamental principles which pull us together, things like basic rights, the basic rights of individuals to come together and act collectively to protect their interests. I can't think of anything more fundamental to a society than the ability to come together in that way.

I think we should watch this closely because it is part of an overall pattern. It is part of an overall pattern of disrespect for the rule of law and disrespect for the fundamental principles of our democracy. I think that is a huge shame. It isn't just this one set of people that are being disrespected, and I think that would be enough. That would be enough for me to stand up and for me to push back and to say: "This isn't appropriate. You can't do this. These are people, and those people have rights. You can't just run roughshod over them." But it isn't just this one group. It's youth. It's LGBTQ youth. It's youth employment. This is a much broader pattern of trying to sink those who have less power, of trying to push down on those who have less power in society, of taking away from those who are already vulnerable.

Essentially, what they're saying is that these individuals who have come to the table, who have participated with Albertans, who have come over a number of years to bargain in good faith with the province, often taking zeros – again, I've mentioned this before in the House. Teachers took five consecutive years of zeros because they, too, care about the future of this province because it is their province, too. To take that, to say, "You came to the table, you acted in good faith, and you treated us fairly" and to turn around and snub it and say, "We're not going to treat you like that. We don't respect the promises that we have made. We don't respect the contracts that bind us. We don't even respect the highest law in the land, the Constitution," I think is disgraceful.

You know, much has been said about the exact timelines in this House, but I think that when members opposite are rising to talk about how things used to be and how things are and who has disrespect for what, they ought to recall, because I certainly sat through many long nights in this Chamber, when members opposite wailed about being asked to consider a bill in under two weeks. Well, here we are looking at a bill in less than a week. I can't even imagine. I remember what the hon. Government House Leader had to say about being asked to do second reading a day or two after a bill was introduced. I can't imagine what he would have said about this. The comments that are made publicly about this: to maintain a reasonable and effective pace. A reasonable and effective pace that is higher than any pace that has been taken in the past? I mean, it's almost laughable that those are the words that are used to describe it.

We need to take the time to consider this because, again, what we're talking about is fundamental. It's fundamental to our democracy. We're talking about the Constitution. We're talking about violating the Constitution. Let's not give it any consideration; let's just put it through in less than a week. I mean, it's incredibly troubling. Again, my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud spelled out, I think, the legal framework around this in incredible detail. But I think that there's more than just legality behind this because, ultimately, this is a matter of the ties that bind us together as a society, the ability to make a promise, to say "I promise" and keep that promise. That's the basis of contract law.

Interestingly, I studied philosophy, and one of the things I took was an entire seminar on promising. It's considered philosophically a very interesting concept because it underlies so much of our society, because it underlies the legal world in a huge way. People's ability to say to each other, you know, "I will do A, and you will do B" and to make an agreement is the basis on which we are able to live together. If we do not have that, the exchange of saying, "I will give you \$10 now, and you will give me a goat tomorrow," if we're not able to make that exchange, if we're not able to rely on the word of the people around us, and if we're not able to rely on the system to force us to keep our word in that way, it really does impact our ability to function effectively moving forward.

Another thing which has been mentioned in this House extensively is the mandate, the mandate of the government, that the government was elected with a huge mandate. But what troubles me is that I don't recall seeing in the platform – and perhaps the hon. Government House Leader will help me out. He seems to like to rise repeatedly. [some laughter] That really wasn't intentional. That certainly wasn't in the platform, this plan to cut public-sector wages. It wasn't in the platform that they intended to roll back the rights of workers.

I mean, a lot has been said about facts or nonfacts or disputes of facts or various other things this evening, so I think it's worth referring to the actual text of the bill because I think, you know, at least in this case, the facts are in black and white. The clause that my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods referred to is a clause which is very rarely invoked in legislation.

- 5 The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations
(c) respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act.

It's used infrequently because normally the House passes legislation, and then cabinet is able to make regulations. Those don't get the same kind of attention. They don't necessarily attract the same kind of public attention. So the reason that regulations are only used to support acts, the reason that regulation-making powers are not generally this broad is because, well, the public deserves to know what's happening.

Again, I've said that this clause is used infrequently. I do know that it has been used in the last four years because I certainly remember discussing it. But in instances in which it's used, it's usually used with an act that has a comparatively narrow focus. The problem is that the intent of the act is defined by the preamble. It's a series of whereases. Usually the preamble to a bill doesn't really add much, but in this instance, because of this particular clause, the preamble becomes highly relevant. In this instance the preamble refers to:

Whereas public sector compensation is the largest government expenditure, constituting over half of the Government of Alberta's operating expense . . .

Then I'm skipping one and moving down.

Whereas the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances, an expert panel appointed by the Government of Alberta, will deliver a final report . . . and time is required to gather . . . [the] information.

9:30

We've had a significant amount of foreshadowing about what it is that this particular expert panel is going to say. We know that the chair has recommended closures of rural hospitals, has recommended wage rollbacks, has talked about wage rollbacks. I mean, they might as well have written right into the bill "whereas we would like to roll back the wages of public-sector employees" as part of the preamble. I mean, essentially, this preamble is foreshadowing exactly what's going to happen.

I'll say it again: if the government is saying that they're not going to do that, that they're not going to impact contracts, that they're not going to roll back the wages of public-sector workers, then why is this here? If you have no intention of using it, why is it there? Certainly, other clauses could have been used. There are a multitude – I mean, I can probably count hundreds – of different regulation-enabling powers that could have been used instead of this one. This one was chosen, and it was chosen with an incredibly broad preamble. It was chosen with a preamble that clearly foreshadows wage rollbacks. Yet here it is. I think it's clear what the intent of the bill is. [interjection] Sorry. I think it's clear what the intent of the bill is. It seemed as though the hon. Premier had something to add there.

I think, you know, the government is in a position to ultimately make these moves and to make them in cabinet with very little debate, which brings me back to the overall concern here, which is, again, that we're violating contracts, that we're violating that which fundamentally holds us together.

We're not just violating contracts for anyone. I think my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods and myself, in a previous statement, have been quite clear about this. You know, the government attempts to set up this dichotomy: like, there are public-sector workers, and then there are people. Well, public-sector workers are people. They're our friends, they're our spouses, they're our families, they're people next door, they're members in our community, and they contribute to this province, the same as we do. This attack on them should not be taken lightly because it isn't going to end here. It isn't just going to be this. It isn't just going to be the public-sector workers and young workers and LGBTQ youth. I mean, who knows who's next?

I think folks should take note of this because it clearly foreshadows what's coming. Again, despite significant talk about things being in the platform, I didn't see in the platform a statement that said: we're going to cut public-sector compensation. I didn't see in the platform a statement that said: we intend to violate our own contracts. I didn't see in the platform anything that said: we

intend to take away overtime. There are a fair number of these things, and it's not okay.

Again, it speaks to disrespect, and I think that in this House we've seen it on a number of different occasions, and I find it very troubling. There is this tendency to write off legitimate questions on the part of the government as, quote, unquote, fear and smear, as, quote, unquote, personal attacks. Well, asking how many teachers will be laid off because of a cutback isn't a personal attack; it's a legitimate policy question. We have a policy difference over whether or not we should cut public-sector workers' jobs in the midst of a recession.

That's probably our biggest fundamental difference, that and trickle-down economics, which I don't believe works and the members opposite obviously do. I think that to write that off as a personal attack and something that isn't worthy of an answer is incredibly inappropriate. To write off a question about whether Alberta's health services are going to continue to be publicly funded, publicly delivered health services that are accessible to all people is disrespectful. To suggest that policy debate like that, that a policy question like that is somehow out of order is disrespectful, the same way that breaking these contracts is disrespectful. I don't think that it's behaviour that should ultimately be tolerated.

I'm sure I can think of a few more additional – we did interim supply just recently, in which all members had an opportunity to go back and forth, and there were, I think, a series of allegations that legitimate policy questions were out of order in various ways. I myself, to my questions about budget numbers, received not a single response detailing a number. I received an angry diatribe that involved yelling and raising of voices and, just generally, angriness. I think that I have a right to ask in this place, on behalf of people I represent: hey, this budget is clearly going to be lower than the last one was; where are the cuts? I don't think that that should get an angry diatribe in return. I think that that is a legitimate policy question, and I think it should be met with a legitimate policy answer. I mean, I think the answer is clearly: of course, there will be cuts, and they will be deep. Otherwise, why would it be met with a long, angry, screaming rant?

Those are many of the places where this government, I feel, continues to be disrespectful of the opposition and our role. Again, a lot of Albertans voted for us. You know, this is the interesting thing, because this all ties back together, in my view. It's true: a majority of voters voted for the government. That's how that works. But that doesn't mean that all minority voices, the other 45 per cent of the population, can be entirely disregarded. In the same way, LGBTQ youth represent a minority of the population, but that doesn't mean that their rights ought to be disregarded. Public-sector workers represent a minority of the population, but that doesn't mean that their rights ought to be disregarded, yet we see this government again coming forward with a bill that says pretty much exactly that.

I'm troubled. I'm troubled by what this bill means, I'm troubled by what the agenda of this government means, and I'm troubled by the fact that I know that there are members on the government side of the House who don't agree with all of these. I know that there are members on the opposite side of the House who do have respect for LGBTQ youth and their rights. I know that there are members on the opposite side of the House who care about the rights of nurses, of teachers, of court workers, yet they don't rise. Not only do they not rise, but they vote to limit the ability of the opposition to rise, and they push through this bill in such a way that they limit the ability of the public to engage.

If there's any one flaw, I would say, in our democratic system, it is that public engagement has been diminishing, and I think that that is sad. It has a certain amount to do with the fact that there are fewer

members of the media, I think. I mean, they do an incredibly good job; they really do. They work incredibly hard at what they're . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, comments? I see the hon. Minister of Finance rising to speak.

9:40

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to refute, I think, some of the comments that have been made by the opposition regarding Bill 9. I think the first thing I want to say is that the intent on Bill 9 is clear. It really is, as the title would suggest, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. The intent is singular. The intent is simply to delay arbitration a few months, until this government has had time to fully assess our financial situation and, moreover, hear from the MacKinnon panel, a very competent, diverse, nonpartisan panel, that has been put in place to deliver, not only to this government but to the people of Alberta, a path forward to balance and, at the same time, a path to continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

We've heard from members opposite about what was and what was not in our platform, but, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to all members tonight that there was something that was very clear in our platform, and that was to bring this province to balance. Albertans have put this government in place to deliver that mandate, and that is the purpose of delaying public-sector wage arbitration, not because we have determined what that outcome should be but, in fact, to ensure that we have sufficient time, sufficient information to be prudent and thoughtful and responsible not only to Albertans but to the public sector and not only for this generation but for future generations.

Mr. Chair, the previous government, the members opposite, had this province on a trajectory for \$100 billion of provincial debt. That is unacceptable to this government, but more importantly it was unacceptable to Albertans. That was one of the reasons why they elected this government, to make the decisions, financial decisions on behalf of Albertans. If our province was going to continue down that path to really unacceptable debt, it leaves Albertans with significant challenges. It has a very negative effect on investment in this province. It would have continued to encourage the flight of investment from this province and, with it, jobs and opportunities. We've heard the members opposite talk about the importance of jobs, and jobs are important, both in the public sector and in the private sector.

Continuing down the path of high and rising deficits, which contribute, amongst other things, to the flight of investment capital, the loss of jobs and opportunities, is a game of declining sums, Mr. Chair. Not only does it lead to future unemployment, job loss, and wealth loss for Albertans, but it will ultimately lead to governments not being able to deliver the high-quality services that Albertans expect and not being able to continue to employ a very vibrant, skilled public sector, that we need to deliver those high-quality services.

Mr. Chair, this Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act is about ensuring that we have the information that's required to make prudent, thoughtful decisions on behalf of Albertans so that we can ensure that we're able to deliver these high-quality services such as education and health care and other services to Albertans. I'm a lifelong Albertan. I've raised a family in this province. We have grandchildren in this province. We have been privileged to benefit from these services that the public sector has delivered, and I can truly say that I'm grateful for and appreciative of the public sector and the services that they deliver to Albertans every day. But the fact is that in order to ensure that we can continue these services, again, not only for this generation but for future generations, we

must be responsible, and this move to defer the arbitration is about being responsible so that we can make, again, thoughtful, prudent, informed decisions on behalf of Albertans.

There has been concern with one of the sections of the legislation, section 5(c), which states that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations “respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent” of the bill. I would suggest, in fact I would state, Mr. Chair, that the intent of this bill is clear. The intent of this bill is simply to delay public-sector wage arbitration. That is the intent of the bill, and I would like to mention to the members opposite that in bills that the members opposite actually created and passed when they were in government, there was similar language in many, many of those bills. Let me read some of those tonight.

Bill 5, Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act; Bill 2, An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue; Bill 4, An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act; Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act; Bill 202, Alberta Local Food Act; Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services; Bill 5, Seniors’ Home Adaptation and Repair Act: that is not an exhaustive list. In fact, I can carry on. Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016; Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences; Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016; Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016; Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring; Bill 19, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act: Mr. Chair, there was very similar language in these bills as well.

I will reaffirm from this government that the intent of this bill is simply to delay arbitration for a few months. Again, this bill is not about the removal of rights. It’s simply about the postponement – the temporary postponement – of process. We take our responsibilities very seriously, the responsibilities that Albertans entrusted us with on April 16, the responsibility of delivering high-quality services to Albertans today, tomorrow, and ensuring that by virtue of doing so, we don’t do it in a way that jeopardizes that delivery to future generations. They also left us with a responsibility to bring this province to balance. We take those responsibilities seriously, Mr. Chair. We require time to deliver well. That is what Bill 9 is about, and we will follow through with that commitment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods standing.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Chair. I would like to say thank you to the Finance minister for speaking specifically to section 5(c). The bills that he was referencing were all limited. The power in section 5(c) was limited by the intent of the act. The intent of this act is wide ranging and specifically talks about balancing the budget on the backs of workers. That is how it is read.

At this point, before I speak any more, I would like to move an amendment, Mr. Chair, to Bill 9 on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

9:50

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, this amendment will be known as A1 going forward, and if you would be so kind as to read it into the record, that would be great. Just to remind you, too, there are another 19 minutes and 12 seconds remaining as well on this part of your questions, comments, and amendments.

Ms Gray: Oh. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I don’t believe I’ll use the full amount of time.

The amendment on behalf of Member Bilous is to move that Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, be amended by striking out section 5(c).

Section 5(c): we’ve had the opportunity to discuss a number of times about the concerns, the strong concerns, that it gives the government power to impose wage freezes, wage rollbacks, that it gives very broad, far-reaching powers, particularly when you consider that it’s governed by the intent of the act. The intent of this act is a very long preamble that touches on a number of things, specifically public-sector compensation, specifically the need to balance the budget, all of this leading us to believe that this section can and will be used to freeze wages for our public-sector unions or roll back wages to our public-sector workers.

Similar to my earlier comments, I will remind this House that the workers we are talking about are the sheriffs in this building, our friends and neighbours, the people in our communities. With this amendment I would like to propose to the government that we strike section 5(c). If the government is intent on moving forward with this bill – and they are, having brought it forward and put in place closure – will you accept amendment of section 5(c)? If you will not accept this amendment, I would very much appreciate hearing the reasoning on why not. I would invite any member of the government to respond.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to make comments or questions on amendment A1? I see the hon. Government House Leader rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Chair, I’m happy to rise on this amendment. I’m looking at it. One of the concerns I have – and I have indicated that to the opposition in the past – is that it would be helpful to provide these with a little bit more notice, and we’d be able to provide them some feedback. I would, through you to the opposition, suggest that they spend a little bit more time articulating to us why this amendment is important, and I suspect we’ll be able to give them an answer to their question shortly.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I think that one of the things was just mentioned. One of the criticisms that has been given on this bill has been mentioned by the Finance minister, and that’s concern that this section 5(c) is the section that gives sweeping powers to implement – let me read it for us: “respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act.”

Really, because of the preamble, a question was asked: how is this different than when this clause was embedded in the Local Food Act, for example, one of the acts that the Finance minister gave as an example of where this clause was lifted from? Fair point. This clause is in other legislation, but the preamble to this act is very different than the preambles for other legislation. Usually the preamble is much more focused. The Local Food Act talked about – I don’t have the words in front of me, but it essentially said: whereas our intent is to support local producers, local agricultural producers, we are bringing forward the following legislation. So it was very clear that if the Lieutenant Governor in Council wanted to bring forward other pieces consistent with the intent of the act, that it be focused in that area, around local food for the Local Food Act.

The intent of this act is much broader given that the preamble talks about things like being “committed to providing high-quality front line services” and that “the Government of Alberta is committed to balancing its budget [in] 2022-2023.” Again, there’s

concern that that means that that will be the highest priority and that through an order in council there could be other, more sweeping impacts to collective agreements that would make that the primary focus.

In the preamble it says, “Public sector compensation is the largest government expenditure, constituting over half of the Government of Alberta’s operating expense.” This leaves concerns that if the LG, through orders in council, is going to be bringing forward amendments where that’s the focus, it would indeed lead to things beyond the scope that has been articulated in this House, around the scope being simply about delaying arbitration, that it would be far more sweeping, the ability to bring forward things through OIC. That’s a bit of rationale for the Government House Leader and all members to consider.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, just a few moments ago the hon. the Finance minister rose in this place and spoke about a couple of things, but what’s relevant to this legislation is that he spoke about the history of using a clause like 5(c) inside multiple pieces of legislation. It’s actually a very common clause inside legislation. I see the hon. member nodding in agreement, that certainly a significant amount of legislation that had a clause like 5(c) has been in this place in my time. I know that the hon. member in her time in cabinet moved legislation that had 5(c) in it, I would assume. Certainly, her colleagues had. You know, stuff like Bill 6, for example, had 5(c) as well as some of the municipal bills that the hon. Finance minister referred to earlier. This is a standard procedure within legislation. I see no need for this amendment. I appreciate the hon. members bringing it forward, but this side of the House will not support this.

The intent of this bill is clear. The Finance minister has made it clear what it is. It’s to keep a promise as we work through our balancing of the budget process, to provide a period of pause just to make sure that we can get all the facts straight and then be able to go through this process properly.

As such, I would encourage all of my hon. colleagues to vote against this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods rising again.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Government House Leader for the response. To respond specifically, yes, this is a clause that can be used in legislation. It always needs to be used cautiously. We always need to look at the bounds for how it can be used, and that is the intent. But the preamble for this bill is very wide ranging, has very big potential intent, and the connection between this preamble and using this section to freeze wages or to roll back wages is easily painted and has been confirmed with lawyers. That is why we have put forward the striking out of section 5(c).

Now, I’ve heard the Government House Leader state in this House that he will not be supporting this amendment. My question to him or to other members of the government is: will you state in this House that you will not use section 5(c) to freeze or roll back public-sector wages?

The Deputy Chair: Are there any others?

I see the hon. Government House Leader rising to speak.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Chair, thank you to the hon. member for the question. The intent of the bill is clear. It’s been expressed clearly inside this House by many members of the cabinet as well as lots

by the hon. the Finance minister. This is, again, a standard clause that is in most pieces of legislation like this. I know that the Official Opposition has many amendments that they would like to move forward this evening, and I suggest they move on because I don’t believe the government will be accepting this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Government House Leader. Absolutely understanding that the government will not be supporting this amendment, I’m simply seeking a clarification. The Finance minister did do a social media video that was posted, but for the record and in this Legislature for Albertans who are watching in the gallery, online, or recorded into the future, the concern is that this section will be used to freeze or roll back public-sector wages. The government has said repeatedly that the intent is only to delay. Let’s connect these two thoughts. The intent is only to delay, so please state that your intention is not to freeze or roll back for public-sector workers.

10:00

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Chair, the minister has been clear on this point. The hon. member is referred to his comments, and it’s time to move on.

The Deputy Chair: Anyone looking to speak to A1? It looks like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore if I’m not mistaken.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. My second opportunity here to speak to Bill 9 and, of course, this amendment to the act to remove section 5(c). As you can imagine, I’ve been listening very intently over the course of this debate, and I have to say that history is a very interesting thing. We can learn a lot from history. We can learn what’s taken place, and we can learn how not to repeat mistakes that have been made in history but also something very important. We can learn what people might do in the future based on what they’ve done in history.

When I see a section like 5(c) in Bill 9, it gives me great pause because I look back as far as maybe only half an hour to what’s been just said around reviewing the finances of the province. The Finance minister said that we need to fully assess the finances, that we need to be prudent, thoughtful, and make informed decisions. He also made reference to the blue-ribbon panel, which, unfortunately, does not have the mandate to review the revenue side. So I struggle with whether our finances are going to be fully assessed, whether thoughtful and prudent decisions will be made.

When I look at 5(c) in Bill 9, I’m hearing, “Well, it’s just standard; we’re probably not going to use it,” yet we’re kind of almost cheaping out on what I was just talking about with reviewing the finances. We have members in the gallery tonight that believe the government is going to cheap out on 5(c) and that they are going to mandate either wage freezes or, probably most likely, wage rollbacks. To have the government be able to just come right in, do that without bargaining, well, Mr. Chair, that leads us back to why we’ve now dubbed this bill the Bad-faith Bargaining Act. So how is it that we give our members, our very hard-working public-sector Albertans, confidence that this government will not do that? This amendment here, by removing 5(c), would at least, hopefully, be a start.

There is still the whole concept around pushing off the bargaining that was made in good faith. You know, I remember one of the members – I’m not a hundred per cent sure; it could have been the Member for Calgary-Hays – talking about the diversity within the government caucus and all the different backgrounds, which is fantastic, Mr. Chair. I love it. What I’d like to do is that I’d like to

appeal to maybe some of the folks that have a business background. So let me ask you: if you're running a business and you've made a deal with somebody, be it a product or service that you require for your business, and partway through the other side says, "You know what; I'm just going to change that," I'm curious, hon. members, about how many of you would have a problem with that. If you don't raise your hand, I think that would concern me if you were a business owner, so why wouldn't these hard-working public-sector workers up in our gallery this evening be concerned? Why are you surprised that they would have a problem with Bill 9?

But we have an opportunity here, Mr. Chair. We have an opportunity to maybe extend an olive branch, to maybe say: well, look, we'll do this in good faith, trying to show you that it really is about just holding negotiations off for just a little while while we look at our finances. Of course, I would really love it if the Finance minister would fully assess our finances, including our revenue side, so that you can make prudent, thoughtful, and informed decisions.

But what concerns me, again, Mr. Chair, looking back in history, is when I've heard certain things said: one of the key elements of structural reform is to move quickly; speed creates momentum; it also makes it harder for opponents of reform to obstruct it, because we don't want to get bogged down with public consultation. Our hard-working public-sector workers in the gallery want the opportunity to bargain fairly, and Bill 9 is taking that away. But by removing 5(c), we're extending a bit of an olive branch, saying: "We won't freeze your wages. We won't roll them back. We'll actually consult you," which means bargain, "in good faith."

I'm curious. Maybe to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont: I wonder if hard-working police officers would have appreciated having their wages just automatically rolled back without even asking them. To the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo: I wonder if maybe our amazing paramedics, colleagues in his field, would have appreciated being told, "Your wage is frozen; thanks for coming." Maybe to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon: I wonder if any of his teacher colleagues would have liked having their wages rolled back. I bet we've probably even got some fine social workers up in the gallery this evening, that work very, very hard for Albertans each and every single day, and I really do appreciate that. Maybe to the Member for Calgary-Foothills: I wonder if any of his colleagues might have had a problem with having their wages just rolled back without even asking. That's what 5(c) tells me could possibly happen.

I look back in history at some of the things that we've heard said: making it harder for opponents to obstruct; not getting bogged down in consultation. That is a recipe, Mr. Chair, for labour unrest, and I would not blame these very hard-working women and men this evening if they took exception to what this government is proposing in Bill 9.

I do want to make sure that some of my other colleagues get the opportunity to speak. I may be up again on my feet, Mr. Chair, with more to say. As you can imagine, I fully support this amendment to remove 5(c). Let's extend an olive branch. Maybe we might be able to gain back some trust. I think that actually voting down Bill 9 as a whole will gain back a whole lot of trust from those hard-working public-sector workers in our gallery this evening.

10:10

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, comments, questions, or amendments? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising to speak.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up here and debate on such important legislation here in the Chamber.

I really do want to thank my hon. colleague for moving this amendment because I think it is something that is very important. We can look at Bill 9 and see that it gives the government carte blanche to roll back wages and to act in bad faith against so many workers across this province. I mean, I've noted that there are a number of unions that are going to be affected by this bill, and they're listed quite clearly in the schedule in the bill.

But I have a few questions, perhaps, to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. I mean, I've really got to ask the member: what is going to happen to the teachers and the students and the parents that are in the Drumheller Outreach school, those grades 7 to 12 students? I mean, those students absolutely do need the best possible education. If they're worried and their teachers are constantly worried about wage rollbacks or what this government will do without any consultation and without letting it be debated properly in this Assembly, what are those parents and teachers going to think?

I'm worried about what those grades 10, 11, and 12 students in Drumheller Valley secondary school will think as well. I mean, those students are going to be worried about what those negotiations are going to mean for things like their class sizes, for things like how many educational assistants they can have in their classrooms.

I mean, even in Greentree school, K to 6: those are some of the most formative years for students. I really hope that the member understands how aggressively this is going to be attacking those families in his community. And it's not just the public workers. Of course, this is about negotiations with those unions and with those teachers, but the families that go to those schools in your community, in Drumheller, right there, are the ones that are going to be under attack.

We also can look at some schools in Stettler. Stettler elementary has 600 students, grades K to 6, formative years for 600 students, and there are so many teachers that have to go into that. When we look at the class sizes that have to be negotiated and the remuneration for that and whether those teachers are going to be able to give their best if they're worried about this government attacking them without consultation, attacking them without allowing them to negotiate properly, in bad faith, I mean, that's something I would be very concerned about if that was my constituency and if those were my constituents. I assume that the vast majority of those teachers would live in your riding, Member. I would also assume that the vast majority of the families that go to those schools would live in that riding as well, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's.

I mean, those are just some of the bigger schools. Of course, we're talking about some fairly large towns here, but there are even schools that are quite a bit smaller, right? We can talk about schools like Byemore school, which is a K to 9 school. There are only about 30 students, two and a half full-time professional staff, and 1.75 full-time paraprofessional staff. Most of those classrooms are even triple graded. If this negotiation goes on and aggressively attacks those classrooms, triple-graded classrooms with only two and a half full-time professionals, what if this negotiation brings it down to two or one and a half? That could be something that could be very aggressively targeting those 30 or so students right in that community. I'd encourage the Member for Drumheller-Stettler to maybe get up and explain to those families why it's okay to attack those teachers, that are working so hard to make sure these students have the best possible education in this province.

We talk about Coronation school. There are about 300 students there, K to 12, but 80 of those are in high school. Those 80 high school students absolutely need to have the best possible preparation they can have for things like their PATs and diplomas,

that are coming up right away. If you're going to be attacking the teachers that are going to prepare those high-schoolers, that's something that can be very aggressive to them. It's not just teachers. We know teachers really do affect our families in very large ways. Teachers teach our students and they teach our kids, and that's something that's very important. Those teachers and those students and those families live right in your members' ridings, just right there in Drumheller and Stettler.

We can also look at the other types of workers as well. There's the Drumheller health centre. There's a 24/7 emergency room there. They provide laboratory services. They provide things like ultrasounds, pharmacy services. All of those people who are under negotiation – I believe it would be probably HSAA and that organization. Those members that live in your riding: I'm sure a number of them voted for the Member for Drumheller-Stettler as well, Mr. Chair. Those members are now being attacked by this government and not being allowed to negotiate in good faith. That's something that I think that the member should be concerned about. I should perhaps explain to those members, explain to those union members and those constituents, indeed, why he is going to be supporting a bill that gives carte blanche for the government to go in and do wage rollbacks and freezes under regulation.

Perhaps he would like to speak to this amendment and explain why it's okay for this to go on, why he's okay with the families in his area not having a say in this Assembly, why the member is okay with the families in his area constantly having their rights taken away by this Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill here, Mr. Chair. I think it's something that all members of this Assembly – I know the opposition is very concerned about. I would hope that we don't have to do the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's job for him. I would hope that he can get up here in this Assembly and do that himself and explain to his own constituents, but I'm happy to stand here with my colleagues in the Official Opposition and stand up on behalf of those constituents of his because we know that when you're elected here to this place, you have to represent all constituents in Alberta, every single Albertan. You have to make sure you're acting in the best faith of all Albertans.

I know that there are nurses in the member's riding who work throughout his area. I know that there are doctors that work throughout his area. I know that there are many lab techs as well that would live and work in his area, Mr. Chair. Those are hard-working Albertans that contribute greatly to those communities because in a number of those communities, especially in those rural communities, when you're talking about health care professionals, sometimes there's just not as many. That nurse is going to be playing multiple roles, or that pharmacist is going to be playing multiple roles. That lab tech is going to be playing multiple roles, and we look at this. Suddenly the member is okay with that lab tech or that nurse not having a say. Suddenly the member is okay with giving an unprecedented wage rollback to that nurse. I hope the member will get up shortly here and explain to me why he thinks that's acceptable, why he thinks it's okay that he should vote against the interest of his own constituents. That's something that I think should be very concerning for him, that his constituent's would be directly attacked by this bill.

This amendment makes it a little bit better. I'd hope he'd support this amendment. Because those teachers, those nurses, those professionals all across his riding, Mr. Chair, it is certainly important that they have a voice in this Assembly. That's why I felt it so important that I get up here today with my colleagues here in the opposition to speak up on behalf of those workers because those workers are Albertans. We know that here in this Chamber every single Albertan deserves a voice, no matter where you come from, which riding you live in, and who you voted for.

Indeed, every single one of those constituents deserve a voice in this Assembly. It's unfortunate that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler doesn't want to give a voice to those constituents. It's unfortunate that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler doesn't think it's important that those nurses have a voice. It's unfortunate that he doesn't think it's important that those teachers have a voice. It's unfortunate that he thinks it's okay that those classes and those classrooms and those students should be allowed to suffer and those families should be allowed to suffer, the families that rely on that essential health care.

That's something that if that is indeed not what he thinks, he should be very welcome here to stand up shortly and defend attacking their wages and attacking their ability to negotiate in good faith, their constitutional right to negotiate in good faith, Mr. Chair. I really do hope he does get up and speak to this because I think every single member of this Assembly should get up and speak to why this is important in their area and why they think that taking away the constitutional rights of their constituents is acceptable.

10:20

Certainly, we can also look at the Member for Morinville-St. Albert, the hon. associate minister here. There are many schools across Morinville-St. Albert. There's Notre Dame elementary school, for example, and hundreds of students there. If those students are not worth having good teachers in their classrooms, perhaps the minister would like to get up and explain why. Or perhaps he'd like to explain to the families in Morinville public school why those teachers don't deserve the right to negotiate, as is their constitutional right. Perhaps he would like to explain to those families why those health workers that live in his riding aren't important. Perhaps he'd like to explain to those health workers why he thinks that their rights are fewer than anybody else in this Assembly or any of those other things. I mean, I think it's something that's really important because these are the issues that affect all of us in this Assembly. These are the issues that affect all of us.

I mean, coming back to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. There are a number of schools. Of course, there's Gus Wetter school in the Clearview school district here. Could you explain, perhaps, to Dale Blume, who's an education assistant in grade 5 and 6 in that school, why he shouldn't have the right to negotiate properly? Right here in black and white Bill 9 takes away that right. This amendment would help protect him a little bit. Could you explain to Dale why suddenly it's okay for him to have his rights taken away and you won't even accept a simple amendment to protect his rights? Perhaps could you maybe explain to Tyler Brochu, the phys ed teacher for grades 5 to 12, why he doesn't deserve the right to negotiate, why he doesn't deserve the right to understand what's going to come if there are wage rollbacks or wage freezes, why you think it's okay that Bill 9 should give carte blanche to these types of things?

This amendment would make a bad bill better, and that's why I'm supporting this amendment, but I want the Member for Drumheller-Stettler to come out and maybe speak to that. Ellyn Schaffner, who's the kindergarten teacher right in your riding – I'm sure she lives in the member's riding of Drumheller-Stettler – she teaches kindergarten day in and day out. Could he explain to her why that suddenly is less important than any other worker in this province, why their right to collective bargaining should be legislated away? I mean, that's something that I think is very concerning. Luke Peters, who teaches the very important CALM program for grade 9 to 12 students and social studies as well – in social studies you learn about how important democracy is and how important the Constitution is and the Charter here in Canada is. You learn about all these important things. But then the member would

go and say: well, actually, your constitutional right to negotiate, though I know you just taught that to the kids, is not important for you.

I mean, that's something that I think the member should get up here and explain to his constituents because there are so many teachers all across his riding that are going to be so significantly affected, the ones who live right in his neighbourhood, Mr. Chair. That's something that I think is very important. It's very important that every single member of this Assembly get up and explain to their constituents. This is just a small sampling of some of those constituents. I'm sure that there are constituents that live in your riding, Member for Drumheller-Stettler, that teach outside of your riding, but those constituents also deserve a voice because they're also going to be teaching or practising their profession and negotiating, and it's going to be affected significantly by this bill.

Really, when I say "affected significantly," I mean that you're going to be trying to break the law against them. That seems quite absurd, and it seems like it'd be quite offensive to many of those constituents. I hope you do get up and take this opportunity, Member, to explain to this Assembly why you think their rights are worth less. I'm sure a number of these people did vote for you, hon. member, and I'm sure a large number of these people are quite happy that you're their MLA, but I would ask that you explain to them, then, why you refuse to stand up on their behalf and why you would go and directly take away their rights at the bargaining table and go in bad faith and allow the government in bad faith to do all these things.

Through you, Mr. Chair, it is very clear that either the member doesn't care about his constituents or he doesn't know the impact that this bill will have on his constituents, and I think either of those would be unacceptable. It is important that we as elected officials in this Assembly get up and speak to bills and we understand the impact they're going to have on families in our riding. These teachers are friends, I'm sure, of many members here. You're friends with teachers, perhaps the teachers that taught their children. Perhaps some of these teachers even taught the children of the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. I mean, those teachers – we know that schools are the cornerstones of communities. We know that the teachers that interact with families all across the community become friends with many of those families, and that is so essential for our communities.

I would hope that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler would explain to those families and the friends of all of the teachers why he thinks it's okay to take away their rights. I mean, I think that's something that every single Albertan and every single member of the opposition, certainly, is very interested to know: why the Member for Drumheller-Stettler thinks it's so easy to take away the rights of the people that he would have sitting next to him in classrooms or the people that would be taking care of his children if he had to use the 24/7 emergency room, or indeed if he had to use the 24/7 emergency centre in the Drumheller health centre? Why would it be okay if, on one hand, he would ask them to help take care of his health, and on the other he would then take away their negotiating rights that are constitutionally protected and their bargaining rights that are constitutionally protected?

I mean, I think that all the workers who work in the member's riding of Drumheller-Stettler would be very curious about this. I think it's something that they would be very concerned about indeed because these are the people that have to take care of our families in our communities, especially in these rural communities, Mr. Chair, where the communities are so tight-knit and everybody knows everybody and everybody is often friends with everybody.

You have to explain to the nurse who works in the 24/7 emergency centre or you have to explain to the lab tech and you have to explain to the ultrasound tech why the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler thinks it's okay to take away their bargaining rights. That's something that the member will have to get up here and explain. I mean, the member will have to get up here and explain to Rebecca Clarke, who teaches high school English and grade 4 English at Gus Wetter school, why her rights are fewer than anybody else's in this province. The member either doesn't care or doesn't understand what the rights for his constituent are. I mean, that is something that is really important for us to get through here.

I mean, I think that every single member of this Assembly should get up and speak up on behalf of their constituents. They should get up and speak up on behalf of their constituents that really do feel the brunt of this because those families and those schools, those hospitals, those health centres, those families are the ones that we're sent here to protect and we're sent here to represent. It's something we see in this bill that directly attacks them. We know this amendment makes it a little bit better because it doesn't give the government carte blanche to do significant wage rollbacks or freezes without any consultation or any negotiation. I mean, I think that is something that we all should be proud to stand up in favour of because it would be creating a more fair system in the Assembly, Mr. Chair.

Maybe the Member for Drumheller-Stettler needs to explain to people like Jaymi Rausch, who teaches grade 2. Grade 2 is an extremely formative year for students, and when we look at students at that age, they absolutely do need the best education. But if the member is okay with holding legislation over the head of the teacher while that teacher is trying to make sure our students have the best possible education, then I'm concerned about what that means for students learning in his own riding, Mr. Chair.

The member has to understand that these impacts will impact those schools, those health centres, those teachers, those nurses, those families, and those communities right in his own riding. If he doesn't understand that, maybe he needs to get up and explain to us why he doesn't understand that. Maybe he needs to get up and explain to us why he doesn't care that it's going to affect those families in his community and those types of schools and health centres in his community.

It has to be one or the other, Mr. Chair. You have to understand the bill and understand what is going on. I mean, it really isn't that many pages. I'd encourage the member that, if he hasn't yet, to read the bill and the amendment. The amendment is only one sentence as well, so there's really not that much homework here for the member to do. He'd be able to understand the negative impact this will have on families in his area. Once he has done the reading and once he has done the research, then perhaps he can get up and explain to us why he's okay with attacking the workers and families that live in his own riding, why he's okay with voting against the interests of the families and communities right in his own riding.

The member has the opportunity here – we have many hours of debate ahead of us – to get up and defend those workers. The member has the opportunity here to get up and speak on behalf of those workers. But if he won't, I'm very happy to, Mr. Chair. I'm very happy to stand here and speak on behalf of all workers in Alberta because workers and their right to collective bargaining and their right to good-faith collective bargaining is something that we in the opposition believe is not only a Constitution right, but it's the ethical thing to do. It is absolutely the right thing that you should do and you should support.

10:30

If the member doesn't feel that way and the member thinks that their constitutional rights aren't important or that their ethical rights aren't important, then he should get up and explain to his constituents. He should explain to those teachers, he should explain to those nurses, he should explain to those health care workers why he doesn't think that their rights are important, why he doesn't think that he should stand up on behalf of them, and why he doesn't think that they deserve a strong voice here in this Assembly. That's what he was sent here to do, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. He was sent here to be their voice in this Assembly, and he has refused to do that today, Mr. Chair. I hope he will prove me wrong and get up and speak to why he thinks it's the right thing to do to attack those workers and it's the right thing to do to give the government carte blanche to attack them. But I'm worried that he won't.

I mean, that's why I'm standing up here today and speaking on behalf of all of his constituents. I'm speaking on behalf of those workers in his area, the ones who are in unions and the ones who are not, because this is something that attacks all workers. I think it's something that I think all members in this Assembly will be very concerned about, so I would encourage him to rise and speak.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we are on amendment A1.

I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler standing to speak.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just like to be brief. I know the opposition has been quite clear about how valuable their time is to them here tonight, so I wouldn't like to take any more of it than I have to.

I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-South for taking the time to look up many of the wonderful schools in my riding and name-dropping a few of the great people that I've met in my travels. I just would like to say that if anybody in my riding has a problem with Bill 9 or any legislation that we bring forward, they can reach out, as many have. I would politely tell them that this is Alberta's response to asking for a little time to know the finances of the province. So far that has been very well received and very understood. I don't know. You said a few people voted for me in the riding. About 77 per cent did. That hospital that the hon. member mentioned in Drumheller my wife is a nurse at, so I try to keep tabs on the staff there and keep them abreast of what's happening here.

I just would like to say that that is almost the most I have heard that hon. member speak on anything other than daylight savings time. I know how you gauge the problems in Alberta and in our world, but I would just like to say thank you for naming those schools. I have been to most of the graduations. It hasn't come up. It hasn't come up on our e-mails. I'll continue to look and monitor, and I'll keep you posted.

Thank you for the attention.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South standing again.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate that the member would rise and speak so briefly but wouldn't address any of the core points of the amendment or the bill. I mean, perhaps he could tell us a little bit more because he did rise here and he spoke in his brief remarks about how many of his constituents have reached out to him about Bill 9 and how they supported it or perhaps some of their concerns as well.

I think that when we look at those schools and those communities – and I think it's great that the member has been to

so many of those high school graduations or perhaps grade 9 and grade 6 graduations. I think that's great. I hope that at those graduations the member explained to those students that if they wanted to go into a job in public service, he would then go after their wages and he would then go after their right to collectively bargain and he would then go after their right to negotiate. I think that's something that the member should explain very clearly to his constituents, and perhaps he should rise in this Assembly and explain to his constituents.

I want to know exactly what some of the things your constituents told you are, hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler and through you, Mr. Chair, exactly what some of those concerns were that were brought up regarding Bill 9 or other bills, regarding their right to collectively bargain, regarding their right to work in education and health care, and whether giving the government carte blanche to attack those rights of theirs is something that they supported. I think it's something that the member should get up and speak at length to because his constituents deserve more than a 30-second quip in this Assembly. I think that when they voted for him – I mean, he said he got 77 per cent. Well, that's quite impressive, but 77 per cent of his constituents I'm sure expect more than 30 seconds for their vote. I know I've spoken for more than 30 seconds here tonight, and I think that my constituents are getting a better value per vote right now than his constituents are. I think that that's certainly something that his constituents should be maybe a little bit concerned about. His constituents, I hope, will get a better value as the night goes on because there really is . . .

Chair's Ruling

Behaviour of Guests in the Gallery

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. I do look forward to the rest of your comments. This is not intended to in any way, shape, or form slow your comments down.

I do want to take this opportunity to just remind those in the gallery that I have on several occasions heard what sounded like laughter, which could have been imputed as trying to influence the debate, which is not a privilege that would be allowable in this case. So just a general reminder to the gallery to maintain order and decorum. That would be much appreciated.

Please, hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, I can speak both at length and in quite many words per minute, so I'm sure that the value that my constituents will get will continue to be very high. But I think I want to compliment the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on having such good cheer in his comments this evening because those 77 per cent of Albertans that were constituents that voted for him, I think, do deserve to have their voice here, and they do deserve for somebody to speak up on their behalf. That's why I will give them the value that they are not getting from that member. That's why I will speak up on behalf of them. The member will only speak for 30 seconds. I mean, I think that they deserve a bit more than that. I think they deserve to understand the implications of having their rights attacked, of having their collective bargaining rights attacked.

This section 5(c) of this bill directly gives the government a blank cheque, basically, Mr. Chair, to go out and do wage rollbacks and wage freezes without any consultation or negotiation. That attacks our constitutional rights, so I'm happy to stand here and speak at length on behalf of that member's constituents because that member's constituents deserve a strong voice. The entire opposition

here will work at length to make sure that every single Albertan has a strong voice in this Assembly regardless of whether they voted for us because that is our job. That is what we were sent here to do. We were sent here to make sure that every single Albertan has a strong voice. If the member does not want to provide that strong voice to his constituents tonight, then I'm happy to do that on his behalf.

I think it's something that is very interesting when we look at those teachers, when we look at those classrooms, when we look at those nurses, when we look at those health centres, because it's going to be people that the member mentioned previously. He said that he has met many of them in his travels, and I really do want to hear what some of those concerns from those people he met were, perhaps particularly around their rights to collectively bargain. I mean, I hope the member can get up and speak at length to that tonight. I hope that he can give his constituents a voice because if he's met with them – unfortunately, I have not personally met with many of his constituents, Mr. Chair, but he appears to say that he has, so he should get up and represent their voices here in this Assembly.

I think that is something that we would all relish here in this Assembly, especially us here in the Official Opposition. We would all be honoured to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. We'd all be excited to hear how, perhaps, he explained to the grade 12 students at those graduations that if they chose to become teachers, he would directly attack their collective bargaining rights; how if they chose to become nurses, he would directly attack their collective bargaining rights. I think that is something that us here in the opposition would all be very excited to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. We would be excited to hear at length from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler because we know that he has the opportunity and the ability to give a strong voice to his constituents. But for whatever reason he thinks that 30 seconds is sufficient for that.

I mean, if I had voted for the hon. member – and I will admit that I did not vote for the hon. member, not because I would not have but because I could not. I do not reside in the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's riding. But certainly, if I had voted for the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, I would expect that I would get a better value than just 30 seconds per vote because . . .

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

The Deputy Chair: We'll hear the point of order from the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Point of Order Brevity

Mr. Schow: Yeah. A point of order on Standing Order 23(c), persists in needless repetition. It's clear the member opposite has a bone to pick with the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, continuously repeating that he wants to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. If he's so intrigued as to what the Member for Drumheller-Stettler has to say, maybe he would sit down and allow the member to speak as opposed to in vain repeating himself over and over and over and over.

10:40

The Deputy Chair: Is there anyone? Feel free to speak to the point of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my right to speak to the point of order. I think there is much relevant new information that I bring to this Assembly, I mean, as I speak to many of the clauses in this

bill and to the effect of this amendment. I think it's important that matters of debate are allowed to run out here. I mean, we are each allocated a certain amount of time here, so when the hon. government deputy whip here speaks about how I should sit down and not speak, I actually would think that is an attack on the democracy of this House. Indeed, we are each allocated a certain amount of time to speak. When my time is complete or I choose to not take it, then the hon. member has his opportunity to speak. That is in the standing orders of this Assembly, so I think that I would ask you rule it as debate.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you very much for that. I hesitate to interrupt you. I just think that we were getting a little off the repetition side of things there. I would say that, in this case, it is one of the main jobs of the chair to ensure that freedom of speech is fully respected in this House. That said, I think that for the purposes of ensuring that order and decorum do continue, I would ask the hon. member to perhaps take his comments slightly away from directing at one individual member and perhaps starting to skirt up to the side of imputing motives of that member as well. I'm not saying you did that at this stage, but I would just say: please be cautious of that when you are making your comments.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-South, please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly would, through you, never impute motives of any member of this Assembly. I would certainly only speak to what the facts and the actions that we can see in this Assembly are and the facts of what this bill and legislation do to constituents of any member of this Assembly. Perhaps in particular I've named certain members such as the member for Drumheller-Stettler here tonight. I mean, I've named him at multiple points because I understand that as they affect all members of this Assembly, those issues are very pertinent. I think that those issues that we've named on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of all constituents of all members of this Assembly are very important.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I think that's something that we need to keep pushing on. We need to keep talking about why every single Albertan, whether they are a teacher, whether they are a nurse, whether they are a professional or a nonprofessional, whether they are covered under a nonacademic association in organizations like SAIT, whether they are covered under the ATA, whether they're a staff member at NAIT or Northern Lakes College, wherever it is, Madam Chair, I think it's very important that we speak up on behalf of every single one of those constituents. If the hon. member chooses not to speak up on behalf of his constituents, I think that is something that would be very unfortunate here tonight. I think if the hon. deputy government House whip chooses not to speak up on behalf of his constituents but instead chooses to try to stifle debate in this Assembly and not support freedom of speech here in this Assembly, as the chair so rightfully pointed out, then I think that would be very unfortunate here in this Assembly as well.

I think certainly here in this Assembly we do strive to make sure that all members understand the ramifications of Bill 9, and that's why I was so proud to support this amendment that was moved to strike out clause 5(c), which really gives a blank cheque to the government to roll back wages and attack workers without any consideration for collective bargaining. I think that is something that every single member here should be very concerned about. If the deputy government House whip wishes to attack our method of

debate rather than the actual amendment, that is his prerogative, but I think that his constituents expect a better value than ad hominem attacks as well, Madam Chair. I think that certainly the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's constituents expect a better value than that. It's certainly something that I think that your and my constituents would expect a better value than.

It's something that I am very pleased to be able to rise here and speak to tonight because it is our duty as legislators to stand up and speak in this Assembly and to give voice to our constituents and to give voice to the concerns of our constituents. Whether we met them at high school graduations or we've met them in our travels in other ways, I think it is our duty to give voice to those concerns. So when we hear from them when we attend their health centres, when we hear from them when we attend their schools, when we hear from them – the Member for Drumheller-Stettler spoke at length about how he had heard from many of them and many of their concerns. It is his duty and it is our duty to stand up for those concerns here in this Assembly, and that's what I'm doing here today. I'm standing up and speaking on behalf of all members of this Assembly that refuse to stand up on behalf of their workers, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler being one of them.

I think that certainly we understand how crucial it is that the government not be given free rein to attack workers without any regard for their constitutional rights, without any regard for unions' rights to collectively bargain, and without any regard for the effect this will have on families, constituents, teachers, nurses, lab techs, and so forth, Madam Chair. It is very important that we understand the impacts of these things in our communities. It is very important that we have a considered debate and an extensive debate on these issues.

I look forward to when my time elapses or I choose to sit down here, Madam Chair. When I sit down here, I would be very pleased to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler on why he thinks it's okay to attack those workers, the ones who live in his riding, to take away their collective bargaining rights, why he thinks it would be okay to take away the rights of the people who work in the health centres in his riding, the teachers that teach his kids and the students around them. It would be very encouraging to me if all members of this Assembly, including the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, would get up and speak to that. It is something that I think all members of this Assembly, all members of the opposition, for sure, and certainly members of the public and the people in the gallery here tonight – they have spent extensive amounts of time and taken time out of their evening to come sit here and watch us debate this bill and this amendment, which I think is a reasonable amendment.

It would be very important for us to be able to explain to the people watching why these actions are okay and why the Member for Drumheller-Stettler wouldn't support a simple amendment that makes the bill better. It just takes away this blank cheque for the government. If we really do respect workers and we respect good-faith bargaining and we respect Albertans, then the member perhaps would get up and explain to me why he would give a blank cheque to the government, because a blank cheque is not good-faith bargaining. It certainly does not respect workers' rights or union rights or collective bargaining rights or constitutional rights, Madam Chair, and I think that's something that is very important. I would encourage the member to rise here in this Assembly, explain to us why he thinks their constitutional rights are not important, explain to me and to all members of this Assembly what the concerns that were heard all throughout the riding were.

I mean, those are things that are very important in this debate because that is indeed what we were sent here to do. We were sent

here to have debate, and we were sent here to debate at length about these bills that affect our communities, that affect the families that attend those schools, that affect the families that have to use that emergency centre, that affect the families that have to suffer because we pass bad legislation in this House. Well, Madam Chair, if it was up to me, we wouldn't pass bad legislation in this House, but the government seems determined to go forward and do so.

I mean, at this point I think that I've spoken quite a bit at length about why I think the Member for Drumheller-Stettler is directly attacking his own constituents, the 77 per cent of constituents that voted for him and indeed those other 23 per cent who did not vote for him as well, Madam Chair. I would really encourage him to get up and explain to those 77 per cent and the 23 per cent, respectively, of his constituents what he thinks of their collective bargaining rights and why he thinks, after hearing their concerns, it's okay to continue to attack them.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I look forward to hearing from the member.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-South for name-dropping my riding so many times. It's wonderful to hear. You're doing a great job.

If I was too brief last time, I'll just say, you know, that if you're asking how I feel, right now I feel kind of embarrassed. I feel embarrassed to be four hours from home, with my little kids in bed without a dad, because I'm here listening to this, over a three- or four-month delay, when we're at \$60 billion headed to \$100 billion.

Ms Renaud: It's called democracy.

10:50

Mr. Horner: Okay. It's called democracy.

We've heard a lot over the last few days and long, late nights about contracts, who respects them, who understands them. I think that's a little rich coming from that side of the House, Madam Chair, considering that one of the reasons that I ran was because I was so frustrated with the treatment of the electricity file from when they were in government. The power purchase agreements, those contracts and the way those were treated . . .

Ms Renaud: How is that relative?

Mr. Horner: Pardon me?

Ms Renaud: How is that relative?

The Chair: Hon. member, through the chair, please.

Mr. Horner: Right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

So contracts. Because I was too brief last time, Madam Chair, I guess you'll have to indulge me, and I'll read you an entire article about them entitled \$1.8B and Growing – Cost to Alberta Consumers from Power Contract Fiasco Mounts.

Losses at Alberta's Balancing Pool from the controversial power purchase deals have now topped \$1.8 billion, but the bleeding is finally slowing – just as the new Kenney government prepares to call in the auditor general to study the fiasco.

The Chair: Hon. member, I will caution you to not use members' names in this House.

Mr. Horner:

"This is a mess entirely of the NDP's making," Christine Myatt, spokeswoman for [the Premier], said in a statement.

“Albertans deserve to know how this happened and how much they are on the hook for.”

The Balancing Pool, a government agency that backstops the province’s power purchase agreements . . . released its annual report last Friday, showing the organization with net liabilities of \$946 million . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I apologize for interrupting. However, we are on amendment A1, and I would caution you to stay on topic.

Mr. Horner: Okay. I think you’ll have to give me a little latitude, considering what I just listened to from the Member for Edmonton-South, regarding staying in your lane. This is about contracts, it’s about the financial state of Alberta, and that’s how we’re here. That’s why we’re discussing this.

The Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Horner:

But looking at the total costs connected to the return of power purchase arrangements from industry players to the Balancing Pool in late 2015 and 2016 . . .

Ms Sweet: Point of order.

Mr. Horner:

. . . shows the mountain of red ink is still growing.

The Chair: Hon. member, a point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Point of Order Relevance

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just under Standing Order 23:

- (b) speaks to matters other than
 - (i) the question under discussion,
 - (ii) a motion or amendment the Member intends to move, or
 - (iii) a point of order or question of privilege.

I would recognize that the member may be frustrated with the discussion that is happening around Bill 9 and what the member on our side has been discussing with him. However, what the member is reading is not relevant to this discussion. It doesn’t matter if he agrees with what our member said or not. Going on and reading an article that is not related to Bill 9 or the amendment is not relevant to this discussion, and therefore it’s a point of order.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It’s pretty rich coming from the opposition at this time of night, particularly after the last speaker for the opposition, the Member for Edmonton-South, spent somewhere around 20 minutes demanding that the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler get up and talk. Now that he gets up and talks, the opposition doesn’t want him to talk.

Ms Hoffman: He can talk, but talk to the bill.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Talk to the bill? I haven’t heard the opposition talk to the bill very much tonight – that’s for sure – and I certainly didn’t see the Member for Edmonton-South talk to the bill. What he did was that he talked about the Member for Drumheller-Stettler a lot. Now, I’ve known the Member for Drumheller-Stettler – he’s a pretty cool guy – and I’m happy to talk about him any time you want, but the reality is that that member asked him to talk.

Now, with that said, I did not hear the specific article that was being read. I do not believe that this is a point of order, but I would caution members that if they are referring to reference material, it should be relevant, certainly, to the debate, and I suspect he will, Madam Chair. Again, they asked the member to get up and speak, and I was looking forward to hearing his remarks. I’m just shocked that the opposition doesn’t want to hear from him now that they’ve asked him to speak.

The Chair: Hon. members, there’s been a lot of leeway given with the prior speaker and the current speaker. I’ve already cautioned the current speaker, and I am assured that he will get to the point.

Hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, please proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. The gist of the article: somewhere between \$1.6 billion and \$2 billion were mismanaged by the previous government. I think that kind of ties the entire argument into the financial mess and state of affairs that we find Alberta in now, and we’re forced to make some tough decisions and fulfill our mandate of balancing the budget within four years. That’s the argument coming full circle.

If the Member for Edmonton-South would like to speak more about my riding and schools and the staff and children there, I guess I’d like to share one story that’s very memorable as I was speaking to a class at the Stettler school. The kids are great, they ask the best questions, and the teachers are always engaged. The question was around class size, which I know was brought up a lot today regarding this bill and the amendment by the hon. member opposite. The teacher pulled me aside after and said – and I’m not making this up – with tears in her eyes: you know, I would rather teach 35 kids than 20 that are coming from a dark place because their parents don’t have a job, because things are tough at home, because they’re coming to the school and are coming from a dark place. She said that as clear as day. It’ll never leave me.

This is about the big picture in Alberta and trying to take care of everybody, not sticking our head in the sand and not just staying in our lane. This is about the big picture. I couldn’t be prouder to stand here in support of Bill 9, not of this amendment. Yeah, it’s going to be a great evening.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, he was a tough act to follow. [interjection] No, he was, actually. He’s got a lot of energy. I’m quite thankful for the Member for Edmonton-South. He’s a young person. I think he’s got a lot to add. I know that he caused a lot of laughter on the other side, so, you know, what’s not to like? And he did get someone to stand up and speak, so that’s a good thing.

Before I get going and start talking about the amendment to this bill, which is the Bad-faith Bargaining Act, I wanted to stop and just recognize and thank, really, all of the public-sector workers in Alberta, particularly the people that are represented here today, just to thank the nurses and the teachers. There are so many different workers to thank, I couldn’t possibly list them all. I know that this is a stressful time, just not knowing what’s happening, so I do want to thank them and thank them for making time to be here to watch us. I know it’s not always super stimulating at this time of night, but I am thankful that they’re here.

One of the things I find a little bit interesting. You know, I sat through years of listening to, first, the Wildrose Party, and there were little leftovers of the Conservatives, and then they became the

UCP. I listened to them for years, as they were in opposition, rail on and on about everything, everything under the sun.

Suddenly things are changed, and I need to spend some time going back through *Hansard*, Madam Chair, to find some clips to sort of talk about, just to address some of the things they're saying here today about what our job is as opposition and why it is important for us to stand up and speak and why democracy is important. You might not like what we're saying, but we have a right to say it. Yes, I know you have a great big mandate, you know, whatever. We hear that every day, multiple times a day. You like to talk about how big your mandate is – I get it – but we also have a mandate. We were also sent here by the communities and the people that voted for us. You may not like it, you may not like what we're saying, you may not like our point of view, but that is democracy.

You're not supposed to eat in the Chamber.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about my community, the community that I represent, which is St. Albert. One in 4 people that live in St. Albert actually are public-sector workers. I didn't realize that until we went through some of the census information, and it was really quite interesting to see where they're working. There obviously are nurses, teachers, and all of those things, so this is particularly important.

I get that the government is saying, "No, we're not doing anything bad; we're just stopping; we're just going to pause; we're going to look at the finances because, oh, my gosh, it's a horrific mess," which we knew they were going to say because this is how it goes. This is how they normally go, Madam Chair. This is the speech, right? "Oh, it's far worse than we ever thought. We're going to look. We're going to make tough decisions." Actually, there was a member that told us that you guys were going to make tough decisions before the election happened. We believed him, but the people opposite were saying, "No, that's not true; that's not going to be the way it is" because they weren't upfront about their platform. In the platform you didn't tell public-sector workers that you were going to pull this stunt.

11:00

Anyway, back to this bill. Let's go back to this. I believe that by doing this what you are doing is that you are creating stress in groups of people that already have very stressful jobs. The Sturgeon hospital in St. Albert is a busy, busy, busy hospital – really busy – that serves the north and all of the communities. It serves Morinville, Legal, Redwater, Gibbons. People from north Edmonton use the Sturgeon hospital. There are nurses, nurses' aides, nursing assistants that work there. I have never ever seen these workers and looked at them and thought: gee, I think we should stress you out a little bit more; let's add some unease to your caseload so that you don't know what's going to happen with your contract, whether or not you're going to get a cost-of-living increase.

Now, the people opposite will tell you: "Oh, the job-killing carbon tax. People can't live because of this extra \$100 a month. The farm is going to go under. My job is going to be gone because of that. I can't afford to put fuel in my vehicle." That stress was caused by a strategy, a tax on pollution, yet they can't understand the stress of not knowing if your contract will continue, if you will get an increase, if things will go the way you think they should go after very little increase for multiple years. They can't understand that kind of stress, but they could understand the other stress. This is putting stress on public-sector workers, and these are workers that already face enormous amounts of stress every single day.

I'll go to a sector that I know. Public-sector workers provide supports for people with disabilities. Believe it or not, government

actually does employ people that work with people with disabilities in Calgary, in Edmonton, and also in the central region, which is Red Deer. There is a large institution in Red Deer. I'm not going to get into that today. We have public-sector workers that work with people with disabilities, and that work is tough. They work with people with very complex issues, severe disabilities in many cases, behavioural challenges, complex needs. These are not highly paid people. These are unionized workers, and I'm thankful for that because they have benefits. They have some job security that people in other sectors don't have. I'm thankful for that. They don't make a lot of money, but they work hard to support their families. What this legislation is doing is telling them: you need to worry about this; there is a problem.

We had a previous government that negotiated in good faith, that did not break the law, that sat down with them at the table and talked to them. What this legislation does is tells them: you should be unsure; we don't know exactly what's going to happen.

Clearly, the government of the day does not respect the rule of law or this process, so much so that they're legislating.

Now, the Government House Leader: I don't know if he's had a few cocktails or what, but he's finding this quite funny. I'm not sure.

The Chair: Hon. member, I would caution you to not incite the other side of this House.

Ms Renaud: Okay. I'll take that back. Withdrawn.

The Chair: Please proceed.

Ms Renaud: I didn't find my comments too funny. He clearly does.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, a point of order.

The Chair: Hon. Government House Leader, a point of order.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Jason Nixon: Under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), language to create disorder, first of all, I assure the hon. member that it would take more than a few cocktails for me to be amused by her speech. Second of all, Madam Chair, that's completely inappropriate inside of the House, to be referring to another member and implying that they've been drinking. Again, it's so disappointing to continue to see the deterioration of the Official Opposition in this Chamber, from Team Angry to just Team Bizarre at this point.

The Chair: Hon. Government House Leader, I completely agree. I have already ruled on the matter. I will ask the hon. member to apologize and withdraw her comment and then move on.

Ms Renaud: Okay. I apologize for suggesting that the Government House Leader had a few cocktails.

Debate Continued

Ms Renaud: Just to move on a little bit with this bill, you know, we've heard over and over again that the reason that this legislation was brought forward is because the government needed time to look at the finances of the province. I find that a little bit rich considering that they had no problem going as fast as possible to create a situation that there is a massive tax cut for already profitable corporations. Now, estimates are 4 and a half billion dollars, that will blow a hole into our revenues. They didn't seem to have a

problem with that, they didn't need the time to stop and examine that, yet they need the time to stop and examine this issue. That's why they brought this legislation. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

I think that had the UCP been truthful when they were trying to sell themselves to Alberta voters, they would have told Albertans precisely what they plan to do. They would have been upfront with their plans. I don't recall hearing about this. I recall hearing: jobs, pipeline, economy, jobs, pipeline, economy, jobs, pipeline, economy. I don't remember hearing about changing legislation around public-sector wage arbitration. I don't recall hearing about changing the rules around GSAs. I don't recall those discussions, yet here we are.

I don't believe they're upfront with their plans, and I think public-sector workers are feeling the same way. They didn't tell Albertans that they'd trash good-faith negotiations that our front-line workers, public-sector workers rely on and expect. They didn't tell Albertans that they would turn their backs on the front-line workers and give a lame excuse that they needed to figure out the province's finances before they could do their job and negotiate in good faith with 180,000 front-line workers. That is a lot of Albertans. Albertans don't buy it. They're not going to buy it. They're going to see very quickly. I thought it would take a little bit longer than it has for the real sort of focus and aim to come out. I'm surprised, actually, at the speed that it's happening. I am really surprised at the speed that it's happening.

The UCP didn't campaign on breaking the law. That's what they're doing with this legislation. They didn't campaign on attacking workers that we rely on. They didn't campaign, Madam Chair, on attacking workers that protect us, not just in this Chamber but out in the community. They didn't talk about those workers. They didn't talk about the front-line workers that respond to our emergencies every single day. Every single day they are out there responding to fires, to health emergencies. They're intervening in all kinds of ways that we can't even imagine.

I've been lucky enough to do two ride-alongs with fire and EMS in St. Albert. Although I always imagined that that job was very stressful and took a lot of skill, I was astounded, actually, by the level of professionalism and skill of the firefighters and paramedics in St. Albert. It is incredible. They would go from a fire emergency to sort of acting as an emergency social worker with a couple that were having issues. The skill of these workers is phenomenal. We rely on those people, and I think we owe them some security in knowing that we will say what we do. If our laws tell us one thing, they should know that legislators and decision-makers will honour that law and follow that law.

The UCP didn't campaign on attacking workers who hold our loved ones' hands and reassure them when they endure rounds and rounds and rounds of chemotherapy or when they're supporting families as they're watching their loved one take their last breath. Those are the front-line workers that we're talking about. These are the people that are there for us when we're at our absolute lowest, and the skill and the professionalism of this group – they just don't deserve any of this.

The UCP didn't campaign on attacking the people who educate our children, our most precious resource. These people already have enough stress in their lives. Can you imagine being a grade 1 or 2 or kindergarten teacher, how tough that is already? I mean, I've visited a classroom just for an hour or two, and it's pretty overwhelming. These are the front-line workers. They don't need to be stressed by a government that at just the drop of a hat will decide: no, we need more time to examine this before we do our job and honour contracts and follow the law.

The UCP didn't campaign on breaking the law. The UCP didn't campaign on attacking workers who facilitate inclusion in our classrooms. These are educational assistants that are there every day doing really, really tough work in really tough situations. Often there are not nearly enough of them in our classrooms. Our classrooms are huge.

I heard somebody back there from the other side talk about someone telling them: I'd rather have 35 students in my classroom than 20 because of the dark days of the four years the NDP were in power. Well, after four decades of Conservative rule, okay, if you want to go with that story. But let me tell you: in a classroom of 35 students the chances are that a few of those students will also have disabilities. You add all of those students with the students with disabilities and then have maybe one or two assistants, and those children aren't going to learn. They're not going to learn in the way they need to learn, and inclusion will not happen in those classrooms if they're not funded properly and if they're not staffed properly. So perhaps you should go back and have a conversation with that person that talked to you and explain that difference.

11:10

The UCP didn't campaign on attacking the workers who teach and inspire our young people in postsecondary. You know, this is our future. They are our future. They're our future doctors and scientists and engineers and translators and social workers and all kinds of things. These folks also have very stressful jobs, and they work in conditions that are not always perfect. They, too, are understaffed and are dealing with massive classrooms, massive lists of students. These are people that deserve a sense of job security and a sense of belief to know that no matter who the government is, whether it's UCP, NDP, or whatever, they will respect the rule of law, they will respect the contract. You might not agree with it, might not like it, might not have been the way you negotiated, but you respect it.

They don't have that security now because they've seen this. They have seen that the UCP government has no problem giving a massive tax cut to wealthy, profitable corporations – they're secure enough to do that – but they have to stop and possibly add all of this stress to front-line workers because they're not sure of the state of finances. I don't know. I don't buy that. Albertans don't buy that.

You can be all smug in here and think: well, we got a great big mandate; we can do whatever we want. Albertans see what you're doing; 180,000 front-line workers see what you're doing. It will continue. This will catch up to you. People are watching. People are paying attention. You can think: we're just deferring; we're just going to wait; we're just going to see. People see what you're doing, and you will be accountable. You can feel, you know, cocky, secure in your great big mandate, but there will be a reckoning someday.

That's all I have to say, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in this Chamber this evening to speak on the Bill 9 amendment moved by Member Bilous to move that Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, be amended by striking out section 5(c).

The Chair: Hon. member, I will caution you on the use of names in this House.

Mr. Schow: I was just reading the amendment.

The Chair: It's a tricky situation, but don't use the name.

Mr. Schow: Oh. Okay. I apologize, Madam Chair. I retract that. I thought I was within the confines of the rules reading the actual amendment moved by the member opposite.

I've certainly heard a lot of conversation tonight about this and specifically about protecting Alberta workers. I think that is paramount for this government. It's something that we are committed to doing. It's something that we think is an absolute priority. I just heard the member for Edmonton – oh, for heaven's sake. I'm sorry, member across the way. I forget your constituency. I do mean no disrespect. [interjections] What's that? St. Albert. I apologize.

I heard the Member for St. Albert talk about how Albertans are seeing what we're doing, and she is, in fact, right. I'm excited that they're seeing what we are doing because I stand in this Chamber and sit in this Chamber, depending upon the time of the day, and I hear what's coming from across the floor. All day I hear the negative, the fear and the smear, the anger machine turned up to level 10. Frankly, the knob is probably broken off because it was cranked so hard.

That's what we hear from the members opposite, and then we get to go home. We go home to our constituencies, wherever they may be across this beautiful province of ours, and we talk to those constituents. We go and we knock on their doors, we speak to the business owners, we speak to the public-sector workers, of which there are many in my own constituency, and they tell me that they are listening. They do hear what we're saying, and they love it. They love what this government had to offer during the election, they love what we had to say while we were in opposition, and now that we are in government, they love what we are doing because we are keeping promises that we made. In particular, there are a couple of people that I've talked to in places that I visited that have made specific note about the moves that we are making and the things that we're doing.

The reality is that this government is committed to getting back to balance. That is a priority of this government. We have said it time and time again. It's in our platform. Every time the Premier speaks, he talks about the importance of protecting this province and getting it back to balance, and a large part of that is ensuring that we know the financial state that we are in. It would be disingenuous to Albertans to move forward without knowing the details that we face, particularly with regard to finances. With regard to finances it's great to refer back to our constituents, even to the private sector, and relate it to them.

You know, there is a store in Cardston that I love to shop at and buy some clothes. Particularly over the last year and a half, as I've knocked on countless doors, I've worn through a lot of socks, so I love to go over to this store. It's called Atkins. It's owned by Kris MacDonnell. She has probably the largest sock collection that I have ever seen and some pretty awesome socks. I encourage everyone to visit Atkins and pick up some socks. The point I'm making here, Madam Chair, is that Kris MacDonnell has to order clothes on a regular basis as seasons change and fashions change, and she has to make decisions as she makes these orders based on what's trending, what's not trending, but also based on projected income and how much she can actually buy versus how much she is going to sell.

For Kris and Atkins to just buy a whole whack of clothing, a whole pile of new jeans or socks or whatever, with no real intent of selling it or without any idea of the financial situation her company is even in at the time would be dishonest to herself and to the business's future. So she takes those things into consideration when purchasing for her company, hoping to buy clothes that will be

purchased and that the business can continue to grow, a business that, I might add, has been around for over 100 years. I celebrate with that, then. It's a tremendous Alberta success story. I love this store and particularly Kris. She's a wonderful lady who's a good, strong supporter of what this government is doing. But if we take the mentality into negotiations, into any decisions we make, rather, without considering all the facts, we are not doing Albertans any service whatsoever.

Another example is Koster's Bakery in Picture Butte. Now, I might have spent half of my kids' college fund buying vanilla squares over at Koster's through the campaign – I was in Picture Butte often, knocking on doors – and its delicious treats. Again, I also encourage anyone, when you're in Picture Butte, to go by Koster's. You will not regret it. They make some fantastic baked goods. But they have to judge what they make every day based on what they intend on selling. If they were to bake 1,000 loaves of bread, which maybe they do, but only intend on selling 100, that business model won't last very long. That's not very good planning.

With regard to Bill 9 all we're asking is for an opportunity to delay negotiations until we understand the entire financial picture. It would be wrong for us to do anything with this government if we don't understand where we are at.

Now, the members opposite love to quote – and I love it when they do this – our campaign slogan: Jobs, Economy, Pipelines. We were pretty clear on that. In fact, we were so clear that the members opposite know it off by heart. They repeat it often, and when they do, I always give a good, "hear, hear," because – I'll tell you – I love hearing it. It's like music to my ears. But the big thing here is jobs, protecting jobs. Now, I understand that the members opposite want to show up for those in the gallery behind me, for their people in the gallery behind me, and I can certainly respect that. But the reality is that we are not just governing for those behind me but, rather, for all Albertans, and what we would like to do is make sure that Albertans and the future of this province are secure. That means doing our due diligence as a government to understand our finances before we move forward with anything.

Now, back to jobs, economy, and pipelines, we do need to make sure that we have well-paying jobs in this province, that we are leaving the province better than we have at the moment, and those jobs . . . [interjections]

The Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Schow: Yes?

The Chair: Sorry.

Can I please have order in the gallery. Can I please have order in the gallery.

Hon. member, please proceed.

11:20

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do appreciate, regardless of whether we agree or not, the members opposite, that their opinion certainly is valued in this Chamber. But it is their opinion that we'd like to hear, not those in the gallery, so thank you for calling those in the gallery to order. I ask them to respect that moving forward.

But it's about jobs. It's about making sure that we have good-paying jobs in this province and that we're respecting the need to have them moving forward.

Now, I do also want to address something that the Member for Edmonton-South had said in his remarks, that when I asked him to sit down, I was suggesting that I'm trying to curtail debate. It is actually quite the opposite. I was simply bringing to the attention of the Chamber that he was engaging in vain repetition, and if he was

that interested in hearing from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, he should allow him to in fact respond.

I think that debate in this Chamber needs to be robust. This should be the highest level of debate in the province. This is, in fact, debate that is determining the future direction of the province, and under this United Conservative government I think it is the right direction. But to simply stand up and take up time and repeat oneself over and over isn't doing any service to anyone's constituents. If I take up five minutes or take up 20 minutes, if I get the message across from my constituents that I was elected to this Chamber to deliver, then I have in fact done my job. You don't have to be an acclaimed high school national debate champion to do that. Kudos to him. I always respect good competition. As those in this Chamber know, debate wasn't my forte in high school. It was more on the basketball court, but I digress.

Albertans do deserve the best. Objectively speaking – and I think the members opposite would agree – Alberta is an incredible province. It's a province that deserves what's best moving forward, and it deserves a government that takes all things into consideration when making decisions for the residents living here and those who we would like to attract to come here in the future. We're hoping that the decisions we make in this Chamber this evening and moving forward will increase migration to Alberta, will increase our workforce, will increase the number of students in our schools, because it is a beacon of hope and opportunity and prosperity across Canada and across the world.

But as we continue to make these decisions, Madam Chair, especially with respect to Bill 9, we must understand the facts. "Facts" might be a difficult word for the members opposite to comprehend. It's a difficult four-letter F-word for them, but facts . . .

Ms Hoffman: Five, actually. And that's a fact.

Mr. Schow: Fact. Sorry. Fact. That is a fact. I do appreciate the member for correcting me on that. I was an athletic student, not a student athlete. What can I say?

But the facts are simple. This province is in a terrible state of affairs. This province needs immediate attention, and it needs a full understanding of the situation that we're currently in. That's why Bill 9 is so important. We're asking for time, Madam Chair. We're asking for an opportunity to analyze the facts, analyze the numbers, so that when the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board is making decisions in the caucus and in cabinet, he is well informed. Anyone who knows the Minister of Finance knows that he comes from a business background of his own. I suspect he's done well for himself. It doesn't happen by luck, something that the Leader of the Opposition said not long ago, during our 24-hour marathon. It's something that I personally took exception to and responded to because I'm looking at this – and Alberta didn't happen by luck. Alberta didn't happen by just pretending that we know the facts. We've done the work, we've done the research, and we know what needs to be done here.

Madam Chair, I simply put to this Chamber that Bill 9 is one that we should support, and we should not be supporting this amendment to Bill 9 because we need all the information possible to make the right decisions for Alberta. I do believe that right now we're on the right course to find that information, but we need time.

With that, Madam Chair, I will conclude my remarks.

The Chair: Are there any other hon. members that would like to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to amendment A1, that is before us now. I think it's particularly relevant in that this is perhaps the most egregious part of Bill 9, which is the entire section that could be used to cancel contracts, to undermine any further negotiations – right? – on each of the affected contracts that are coming up here between the province of Alberta and any number of workers, from the teachers to the nurses, 180,000 workers.

We had the Treasury Board president and Finance minister emphatically jumping up and down and saying: no; this is just a pause to wage reopeners and arbitration and so forth, and then everything proceeds as normal. But, you know, this section 5(c), Madam Chair, undermines that or is quite contrary to that assertion. If you use section 5(c), you are in fact able to do any number of other legislated changes to individual contracts, including imposing the terms of contract and so forth. My question is: if you are so emphatic about only using Bill 9 as a pause, why does section 5(c) exist? Why is it there? I would beg an answer from the members opposite although I can see that many of them are wearing bright pink earplugs that their Premier is handing out to all of them right now. Probably many of them can't even hear what I'm saying right now. I'll test it with the House leader. Oh, he's coming. Testing: one, two, three. Oh, he took them out. That's great.

The point is, I guess, that if we want to move forward in a constructive way and in sort of a collaborative way, this particular amendment is a perfect way by which to send a sense of reassurance, albeit probably quite tentative, to the 180,000 or more workers that can see Bill Threat categorically as a threat to bargaining, a threat to their family's income, to the conditions which they work in, and perhaps, quite frankly, a threat to many people's jobs – right? – because, of course, when you are interfering with contracts and fair collective bargaining, then the people that have less seniority or perhaps are in other circumstances: their very jobs can be threatened or undermined. I don't think I have to tell anybody here in this House or the people listening that Bill 9 or just the existence of Bill 9 categorically has sent a chill through the public service and all of the essential services to which they are responsible.

School boards are already not renewing contracts for teachers for the next school year, because they have to build their budgets. They're already many weeks behind in actually building their budgets. They had to defer to, you know, see where funding was with the interim supply at sort of the eleventh hour, the eleventh minute. Some funding for enrolment was achieved, but we also heard, almost in the same breath, that the Minister of Education took away classroom improvement funding, which, again, results in significant job loss and unstable funding for education.

Same thing with hospitals, right? We know that hospitals are not hiring. We know that hospitals are short-staffing on individual units. I talk to nurses and LPNs and so forth every day. They say: we've been short-staffed again. Tonight probably there are some nurses listening to this very thing that's happening here in this Legislature. They're working night shift, just like us – right? – caring for people who are sick and families and so forth. They are short-staffed already, even before the sword drops from this UCP government. Again, you have the letter of the law that's in a bill, and then you have the tone that is sent with that bill. By removing the particularly egregious section 5(c) from this Bill 9, then you perhaps soften that tone, which is aggressive and, you know, full of language around attacking, not respecting collective agreements and so forth, and perhaps go to a better place.

11:30

We know, Madam Chair, that when you're looking at the budget as a whole for the province of Alberta – it's a considerable budget – if you are taking out revenues, like the removal of the collection of the carbon levy, you know, reducing corporate tax, you end up with a multibillion-dollar hole in your budget. There are only so many ways by which you can hope to achieve to compensate for that, and the number one place is the wages for public-sector employees. So the idea that you march in after a month of being a government and you put in enabling legislation such as Bill 9, that can literally wipe out contracts, just at the time when the public service has so many outstanding contracts that need to be worked through, then, of course, people are nervous. Of course, people are looking for reassurance, and a way by which we can do that is not just through words but through action. I would say that by removing the section of Bill 9 that talks about using that as enabling legislation to rewrite contracts, to strip collective bargaining, would be a step in the right direction.

So often we hear with this government that they talk about their mandate and how they like to swing their big mandate around, and it's all very fun and good. But the mandate you do have, actually, as a government is to be responsible to the public services that you provide as a government: health care, education, infrastructure, social services, security, and protection. To in any way compromise the integrity of those essential services, which this government is responsible for, is irresponsible. Certainly, we still have a way by which we can pull back on this. I think it's not, you know, a done deal yet by any means. We know, by negotiating contracts over the last four years, that you can in fact negotiate in good faith. If you open up the books and you show the various sectors of the nurses and so forth and the teachers, show where you are, and you show where you want to be, you can come up with lots of great collaborative ways by which to solve financial problems and challenges in all sorts of sectors.

I know that for myself, personally, in regard to education that teachers, support staff knew that we were in a difficult financial circumstance, but they also knew by the authority of trust that we did invest in the collective bargaining process – going to the table as equals, going to the table in good faith – that you can come up with lots of other ways by which to not just negotiate wages but negotiate the quality of the service that you're delivering. So there you go with the contract, the first provincial contract with the teachers, you know, negotiating as a provincial body, entity, we came up at the table with the classroom improvement fund. What a fantastic way by which you can invest in the classroom, have meaningful discussions about where you make that investment to reduce class size, to maybe focus on basic skill learning.

We had lots of school boards like in Fort Saskatchewan, I know, that took on a school board wide initiative through the classroom improvement fund to increase reading levels amongst the youngest grades, right? They put in a multiyear program to ensure that students are reading at grade level by the time they get to grade 3 and were willing to take that classroom improvement fund money to pull everybody up to that level so that a seven- or eight-year-old, then, is reading at grade level, and they are set for the rest of their K to 12 education and beyond.

Those programs are in jeopardy now, Madam Chair, because we see already just from interim supply that the government is cutting the classroom improvement fund, a collaborative effort achieved at a bargaining table in good faith that came up with solutions that were going to improve student outcomes, improve students that were reading below grade level. Together, through the collective bargaining process, we came up with a way by which to make that

investment in those young kids. It improves the classroom conditions for the teachers, for the students, for the parents, for everybody.

What's the point of all that? That table is not just a place where, you know, you have a battle with the workers that you are negotiating with. It's a place where you can start, in good faith, to create a better circumstance for everyone. It doesn't always just involve wages. It involves the working conditions and the quality of the delivery of those services for which we are responsible.

Madam Chair, I would strongly suggest to all members of the Legislature that we take this modest amendment, which is the removal of section 5(c) from Bill 9, to ensure that this is an endeavour that is being exercised in good faith. If it's truly just as the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance emphatically says in person and on the Internet, that it's just a way to pause and take a second look at these things, then remove the section that otherwise would make Bill 9 a huge club to swing around to remove the rights of collective bargaining and setting of wages and working conditions for more than 180,000 workers. Those workers are skeptical right now, and I don't blame them. Quite frankly, I am skeptical as well.

I know that as a teacher – I taught for 20 years – in 1993, when I was a young teacher, the government went through an austerity process as well. They would say one thing, dangle it up to the right, and to the left they would take away wages. They would take away classroom conditions. They would take away the futures for kids, for young teachers, and hope for families as well.

I don't think that Albertans are in any mood for anything that resembles that again. If this UCP government thinks that their recent victory in the election is a mandate to do all of those things around austerity and to make deep cuts into essential services that Albertans depend on, then they are frightfully and woefully wrong. I would suggest otherwise, that this amendment is a nice way to send a better message, you know, for the sake of 180,000 public service workers and the many, many, many hundreds of thousands – I dare say millions – of Albertans that depend on those services to ensure the safety and the security and the good health and the education of themselves and their families and that we do follow through with this amendment. We'd all be better off for it.

Thanks a lot.

The Chair: Hon. members, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, shall I call the question on the amendment?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? Comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, it's been an interesting evening so far on the debate. I rise again to introduce another amendment. I will give you the original with the requisite number of copies.

The Chair: Member, please just wait a minute until I receive a copy.

11:40

The Chair: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A2. Hon. member, please proceed.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I feel that this amendment is a reasonable amendment, and I would like to encourage the government to take an open mind with this amendment and listen to my rationale, because I feel like it speaks to some of the conversation that we've actually been having in this House around the blue-ribbon panel and the fact that the full intention of this bill is actually just to allow the blue-ribbon panel to come back and to provide recommendations to the government about what they should be doing as they move forward around, specifically, arbitration with this bill but, of course, the other recommendations that may be coming around how to support the government in making fiscal choices.

What we see in Bill 9 is very clearly under the preamble, and I will read the preamble, just the piece specific, where it says:

Whereas the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances, an expert panel appointed by the Government of Alberta, will deliver a final report by August 15, 2019, and time is required to gather other information on Alberta's economy and the Government of Alberta's financial state.

Fair enough. You've given us a very clear date, August 15, of when the blue-ribbon panel will be providing a report to the government.

What I'm recommending with this amendment is that we, then, look at section 2 as well as section 3 within Bill 9. First, section 2: what I recommend is that it is amended by striking out "October 31, 2019" and substituting "August 31, 2019" wherever it occurs and also in subsection (2)(b) by striking out "November 1, 2019" and substituting "September 1, 2019."

I will just speak specifically to section 2 to start, and then we can move into section 3. Section 2 is basically amending the shortening of the temporary suspension period by two months for arbitration. What Bill 9 currently says is that you will look at going back to arbitration on October 31, 2019, and start setting your new arbitration dates for negotiation with your bargaining units and the employer.

What I am suggesting is that because you've already indicated in your preamble that you will have your report by August 15, you actually start setting your arbitration dates on August 31, 2019. That's just setting the dates. That doesn't mandate you nor does it require you to be going straight into arbitration on August 31. All it asks you to do is to start working with the employers to set those new arbitration dates that you've already put on hold.

It is a two-month change, for sure. It's a two-month advance on what you've indicated in the bill because, of course, you've indicated that August 31 would be the date that you would then start going back to these bargaining units to set your dates. But the date of October 31, 2019, is just about setting dates; it's not actually about entering into the arbitration process. So if your argument is that you're waiting for the blue-ribbon panel to come back and to provide you a report, which they're going to provide to you on August 15, there should be no reason why the government wouldn't be willing to enter into talks with the bargaining units to start setting those dates then, like, August 31, 2019.

You also have other bargaining units that within this same section were going to be set for November 1, 2019, and all I'm saying is that instead of waiting till November 1, 2019, you start setting those dates on September 1, 2019. Again, yes, it's a two-month change. It brings your agreement to start talking about setting arbitration dates two months ahead, but it is still after your blue-ribbon panel's recommendations will have been received by this government. I think that's fair. I think that's reasonable. If the whole argument around arbitration and setting arbitration dates is because of the blue-ribbon panel, this still allows your blue-ribbon panel to give you the recommendations to the government, but what it says to the employer, to your bargaining units, is that you're willing to start

talking about arbitration again two weeks after you've received that report. It's not saying that you're going to start negotiating on those dates. It's just saying that you have a willingness to be co-operative and to work in a respectful relationship between the employer and the employees.

Again, I feel like this is fair. This meets your argument around the blue-ribbon panel and the recommendations, but it also speaks to your bargaining units to say that you're willing to bargain in good faith. It's a good-faith argument. It meets everybody's needs. It meets your bargaining units' needs because they're believing that you're entering into this with good faith, but it also meets your mandate, that you've clearly given all of us in this House, about the blue-ribbon panel recommendations having to be provided to the government. That's section 2.

Now, section 3 amends by moving the rescheduling deadline dates for the holding of arbitration hearings up by two months. Your deadlines currently in this legislation would be – for June 30 to August 1, 2019, they are the ones that you are currently putting on hold today, because you have bargaining units that are actually in arbitration that should be starting on June 30, to August 1. You've had some agreements that you've put on hold that you've asked the arbiter to put extensions on, which would be impacted by these dates. They would then go to October 15, 2019, instead of being December 15, 2019. Again, I'm pushing your dates up by two months. However, in saying that, this still meets your mandate around your blue-ribbon panel. It still gives your bargaining unit on the employer side an opportunity to review the recommendations, and it still gives you two months and a bit, actually, from August 15, when you receive the report, to be able to meet with your bargaining units on October 15 instead of waiting until December 15.

In addition to that, you also have August 2, 2019, to September 30, 2019, that would then become January 15, 2020. Now, again, same argument. You have bargaining units that were guaranteed to have an ability to enter into arbitration between the employer and the employee that you've asked to push those dates back. All I'm saying is that as a reasonable government who wants to work collaboratively with your bargaining units, then instead of pushing them all the way down the line from December as well as the other ones that were set in October, you actually just move them back here two months.

Your bill actually speaks to this already. In your amendments it was a two-month bump for every bargaining unit group that you had decided to push back. All I'm asking you to do is to be reasonable and to start entering into those conversations at the end of August and to start setting those dates, instead of in December, in September and October. I think it's reasonable. It still meets your mandate, your whole argument around the blue-ribbon panel, your whole argument of saying that we have to wait till you get your report back. Fair enough. If that's the direction that this government has decided to take, to wait till your panel comes back to give you some feedback on some fiscal decisions that you need to make and that arbitration is part of that process, it is totally within the government's prerogative to do that.

But if we're going to talk about good-faith bargaining, which is what we've been talking about for the last few days and what we've been asking you to do, which is to show all of these bargaining units that you respect this process, which is what we're asking you to do, which is what everybody is asking you to do, just respect the process, respect these bargaining units, respect that they have a right to arbitration, then instead of pushing all of these dates back to unreasonable time periods, in my opinion, then acknowledge that you have from the 15th to the 31st to start setting those dates. It still gives you two months to review the recommendations before you

start entering into the bargaining process. You can do the math. I'm sure it won't take you two months to do the math. I feel like you probably have some ideas already about maybe where you want to go. But let's look at that.

If it pleases the House, I can read section 3. I did read section 2. Section 3 is amended (a) by striking out "on or before November 30, 2019" and substituting "on or before September 30, 2019" and (b) in clause (a) by striking out "December 15, 2019" and substituting "October 15, 2019" and by striking out "during the time period beginning on June 30, 2019 and ending on October 1, 2019" and substituting "during the time period beginning on June 30, 2019 and ending on August 1, 2019." Again, in clause (b) by striking out "March 15, 2020" and substituting "January 15, 2020" and by striking out "during the time period beginning on October 2, 2019 and ending on November 30, 2019" and substituting "during the time period beginning on August 2, 2019 and ending on September 30, 2019."

Again, I just want to reiterate that I feel like this is a reasonable discussion to be having with the government. I feel that, you know, we all have very strong opinions, I believe, on both sides of the House, some believing that this side of the House doesn't appreciate the fiscal responsibility that the government has. I do appreciate the fiscal responsibility. I feel like the Finance minister and I have been able to have pretty reasonable conversations around different strategies, around different bills that we've discussed, around different ways that we can do economic stimulation and how you can manage budgets and different things like that. I feel like this speaks to that. I respect that you've created the blue-ribbon panel and that you're waiting for those recommendations to come back. I believe that that process is fair and that that is a decision that this government has made.

What I do not believe is fair is using it as a reason to push back fair bargaining practices and arbitration practices and to put workers in a vicarious position, not knowing what the process is going to be, when it's going to start, and what the outcome will be. I would encourage the government, please, to at least look at this amendment, take it into consideration, and recognize that I don't believe that it's actually asking for that much. It's asking for you just to push things back by two months. It's still allowing you to look at your recommendations and to implement them. It's not mandating you to immediately go into arbitration and bargaining processes. All it's doing is saying: we believe in good faith, we believe in the bargaining process, and we believe that the employer and the employee have a right to a conversation to actually set dates to begin this process again.

I will leave it at that, and I look forward to hearing the response.

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to respond to the, I think, reasonable amendment that the hon. deputy House leader of the opposition has made. You know, as I listened to the hon. member's comments, it reminded me a little bit of the thought process that we had when we were considering the contents of this bill. We recognized the critical importance of hearing from the MacKinnon panel, and we also worked to understand how much time we would need as we worked through the conclusions of that panel and also melded those with our upcoming budget deliberations. So we recognized as well the importance of being, again, thoughtful and prudent and ensuring that we had full information in making those decisions.

Lastly, we wanted also to ensure that the dates we chose were the least intrusive on the public sector. We didn't want to extend it

longer than it needed to be, so we did put a fair bit of thought and deliberation into choosing the October 31 date. We believed that that would give us enough time to adequately consider the panel's report and conclusions, again, relative to our upcoming budget and relative to our plan and responsibility to balance in our first term and balance that out, again, recognizing the importance of creating as little intrusion into the public sector as possible.

To respond to the member opposite, our thought process was similar, I think, to what the member articulated, so we came down on these dates after, I think, an adequate amount of deliberation, conclusion, and input. I believe the dates we have in this bill are the dates that will serve the process most adequately and, ultimately, Albertans correctly.

11:50

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Finance minister for the response. I appreciate what he's saying. I do. I guess, for me, this is about actually just setting the dates. This isn't actually about working through the arbitration process. This is where I struggle. Arbitration can actually take a very, very long time. Going through it as a bargaining member and representing members at one point, it took us a very long time to be able to come to an agreement within the public sector, sometimes years to finally be able to get to a place.

I guess the part that I struggle with is that when we look at arbitration, an arbiter is supposed to be independent. We have a group of representatives from the employer side and we have a group of representatives from the employee side that start opening up a conversation around language, around specifically wages, I guess, in this context. The arbiter is supposed to be neutral. If the government is saying that from August 15 until October 31 they're not going to be able to have an understanding of what kind of wage negotiations they're going to be able to put in, I'm a little bit cautious around thinking that that could be the fact.

I feel like it won't take this government two months to decide what they're going to do around wages for public-sector workers or for any of these bargaining units. I also believe that these dates – again, it doesn't mean you're going to have an agreement that day. All it's saying is that you're willing to enter into an independent arbitration process between the employer and employee. I would be curious to think that the government would try to influence that process with directing the arbiter how to do that, because typically it would be the employer side having a group of individuals and the employee side having a group of individuals. There should be enough understanding, I would think – even given the fact that this bill is in front of us speaks to the fact that the government has thoughts about this already.

I also trust that the blue-ribbon panel, given its mandate and who sits on that panel, has been pretty transparent about some of their thoughts around supporting, you know, whether or not there should be salary freezes versus rollbacks for some of those things. We have seen reports written by some of the individuals on that panel about what they believe would be in the best interest of financial prudence in this province.

I struggle with the fact that the government isn't willing to just push these back to even just start the date. Again, this is about setting dates. This isn't actually about how long the arbitration process is going to take. This is just about setting dates and acknowledging the collective process and acknowledging the fact that all of these bargaining units have a right to arbitration and that they have a right to collective bargaining.

To have good faith and to show goodwill as the employer to these bargaining units, I would say that being willing to go back two months and just set the dates is reasonable given that it's still past your blue-ribbon panel. You can still have conversation amongst yourselves around what those negotiations will look like and what the outcome of those negotiations will be. As I'm sure the government is aware – and I know there are members within their government that worked at the labour board, so they're very aware of this process – there is time and there are many meetings, and there are many processes that go through this whole wage arbitration process and that it doesn't happen in a few weeks.

Even if you said, "August 31 we're going to start talking about setting dates," well, it could take a month or two to set those dates, so you might not even be going to your first arbitration meeting until December, which is still two months after your blue-ribbon panel has come back. Then, even after that, it could take who knows how long until you actually get to an agreement based on many discussions and many factors. Saying that October 31 we're going to start trying to figure out what date we can meet: I still think that is reasonable.

12:00

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to be able to rise to this very reasonable amendment. I do plan to support it, and I appreciate the member bringing it forward. I think that it's reasonable in the fact that while I will definitely not be supporting this bill as a whole, I think that we should be able to, as legislators, find some common ground here. Maybe the government doesn't plan to bargain in good faith with public-sector workers, but hopefully at some point we can find the ability to bargain in good faith here in this Legislature.

There were instances when we were in government over the last four years where amendments came forward from the opposition, Wildrose or UCP at that time, and we said, "Hey, you know, this is reasonable; this is a happy compromise, and we can find ourselves supporting it," and we did. I really hope that the government does consider supporting this. I think that the way that the bill is written right now leaves too much wiggle room. These public servants are expecting more from this government, and through Bill 9 we've seen that the government is not willing to listen to them.

The fact that they're giving a timeline for waiting for a blue-ribbon panel to come back with answers that the government already knows – the government knows what is going to come back, especially considering that the blue-ribbon panel is only considering one side of the equation when it comes to returning to balance and fiscal responsibility. The blue-ribbon panel is going to come back and say that we're spending too much money, but the fact is that the government hasn't given them the ability to look at the tax structure of the province, so they're going to come back and say – well, they're going to become a scapegoat for this government to look at public-sector and public servant wages and say: "Well, this is really the only mechanism we have to reduce the debt, and the blue-ribbon panel said that it was okay to do so, so we're going to start making cuts. We're going to start renegotiating wages and, like we're seeing in Ontario, start capping wages over the next four years and possibly worse." What we've seen through this legislation is the ability to roll back wages. Of course, that was the discussion of the last amendment – I won't get into it – that we put forward, the unbelievable power that this government's trying to give themselves to negotiate wages on behalf of these public servants.

I think that this amendment is reasonable, and I think that this government should really consider supporting it. Do I think that they're going to? Probably not, based on the quality of discussion or the willingness of the government to actually hear us out this evening and for the last few evenings of discussion on this bill. You know, we saw 20 minutes ago that the Premier or one of the members started handing out earplugs to the members of this Assembly, which is very concerning for me. We're sent to this Legislature by the people of each of our constituencies, and they expect us to be doing our job when we're in here, so to see members starting to put in earplugs, which I believe most of them have taken out now, is very concerning for me.

It really goes to show – I've been following the social media discussion on this issue, as I do with all discussions, and there was a community member in the constituency of Airdrie-Cochrane that was reaching out to their MLA on Twitter to find out: why are you supporting this bill, considering the unbelievable power that it's giving to the government to force contracts on public servants? And what was the response that this member of the public got? They got blocked instantly on Twitter.

The Chair: Hon. member, let's talk about the real world and this bill in this Legislature and not the social media world.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, this is the real world.

The Chair: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Freedom of Speech

Mr. Bilous: I rise on a point of order, Chair. In this Chamber in committee members are allowed a gross leeway to debate the bill, to discuss things like closure, which are related to the bill. That is part of the freedom of speech in *Beauchesne's 75*.

The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee. It is primarily guaranteed in the British Bill of Rights which declared "that the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place outside of Parliament."

So the member talking about the bill and how it relates to the proceedings in the Chamber here tonight I assert is the member's privilege as a member of the Chamber and he should be allowed to continue.

The Chair: Hon. Opposition House Leader, Standing Order 23(f) should be referenced here, should have been referenced in your debate. There has already been a ruling on the matter that has been dealt with in regard to calling the previous question. We've already discussed that matter. It's done. We're on Bill 9. We need to proceed with the matter at hand.

Mr. Bilous: Under 13(2), Madam Chair, I appreciate that the motion of closure has been enacted, but there very much are time constraints, and members can bring up the fact that there is a limited amount of time to discuss this procedure. It is parliamentary tradition. I encourage the chair to look at the past 75 years. I've been in this House the past seven years, and not once has a chair ever ruled talking about closure or time allocation, including members of the current government who were opposition when we brought in time allocation, discussed it at length.

The Chair: Hon. member, the issue is not with referencing the decision; it's with revisiting the decision that has already been made. We've been revisiting this decision multiple times in this Chamber, but we need to keep it on track, especially as the hour goes through the night.

Mr. Bilous: With all due respect, Madam Chair, again, this relates back to freedom of speech and members having the ability to be able to discuss. This is related to this very amendment. This is related to the bill, and I contest that members need to uphold the freedom of speech and the ability to allow members to speak.

The Chair: The member will be allowed to speak. He will not be allowed to speak about the matter in which we have already debated at length and has been decided on.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday. Please proceed with caution.

Debate Continued

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Now, I do want to revisit the point that when constituents reach out to us, whether it be on Facebook, Twitter, whatever social media it may be, it would be awfully convenient for me to say: well, this constituent is not living in the real world. So I do take concerns with the matter that was just brought before us and the comment that you made. I think that it's awfully important for us as politicians and as representatives of our community to be able to visit all mediums and hear from constituents in all sorts of ways, whether it's a phone call to our office or being reached out to on social media. It is a grave concern, and we have seen legal discussions in previous years about the fact that representatives should not have the ability, with, of course, exceptions, if there is targeted harassment, to be able to block constituents that they represent on social media.

So it was a great concern to me to see that happening on social media, to see the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane – whether it was the member or a staff member, it doesn't matter. It's a concern. They should consider revisiting that matter because each constituent of ours should have the opportunity to have that discussion even if the member doesn't agree with the position that the constituent is taking.

An Hon. Member: You responded pretty good.

Mr. Carson: Now, really, I did respond because I think that people across the province . . . [interjections] I'm being heckled by the member. I think that we should be listening to our constituents, and we should listen to everyone even if they are not in our constituency, which is why I responded to the member's constituent even though that member wasn't willing to do so.

Just getting back to the amendment, Madam Chair, I will be supporting this amendment. I think it's very reasonable. I think that setting some timelines, of course, not trying to force the government to begin negotiations but at least starting to consider them as soon as the blue-ribbon panel concludes – once again, I don't think that the government is going to receive any new information that they didn't already have before them with the wonderful public servants that they are provided with to gather this information for them in the first place. I do believe that it is going to become a scapegoat for them to start cutting wages and capping wages. But I'm planning to support this amendment. I hope that all members of the Assembly will.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Madam Chair, I hesitate to interrupt, but I did find it fascinating talking about Twitter. First, I wanted to agree with you. I don't think Twitter is the real world, but I don't know if that's really that relevant to the bill, which I think was your point. I just wanted to talk about what I think is the hon. member's point – I'm not sure; I'm having trouble following it – that he feels that the government is not talking to constituents and something about somebody blocking something on Twitter. I was still struggling to see how it had anything to do with Bill 9.

12:10

But the reason I wanted to jump up and have a quick conversation was my experience with NDPism. I'm sure yours has been, Madam Chair – you've been here as long as I have been. That's quite frankly been the biggest problem with the NDP, that we hear about all the time. I have had to spend significant time inside my large constituency that I represent, often had to spend time servicing constituents inside the old Banff-Canmore constituency, for example. I know that won't happen anymore because Banff – sorry; Banff-Cochrane riding, back then. Cochrane's now represented by two excellent members – or one excellent member of the Legislature. It's your town that now has two. Sorry, Madam Chair. And Banff-Kananaskis is also represented by an excellent member now, so I suspect that it won't happen.

If we want to talk about not helping constituents, I think that's a great example. The former Member for Banff-Kananaskis, he and I had an interaction to do with one of his constituents when he was first elected. I found this shocking. There was a gentleman from Sundre who came in to my office, and he was quite emotional. He had a brother at the time who was in his late 90s who landed in Normandy on D-Day, was knighted by the French government afterwards, a pretty interesting individual, a hero of our country. Then he came home and he settled inside Canmore and he married a young lady who became a nurse who then ended up running the hospital inside Canmore. They lived together for 50, 60 years inside the Canmore community. Then his wife got sick, unfortunately, Madam Chair, and they had no space for her in the Canmore hospital. They asked for her – because of that, they moved her to Calgary and by this point this gentleman could no longer drive.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hate to interrupt. I assume you are going to tie this in to the amendment.

Mr. Jason Nixon: You bet, Madam Chair. I'm getting there, and I'm going to get right back to the bill. I'm coming there, full circle. Do not worry.

Anyways, he could not drive to see his wife anymore. His brother was a little bit younger and was quite emotional about that. They're having trouble getting them to connect. You can imagine, Madam Chair, how hard that would be for a couple that were married that many decades. Interestingly enough, they contacted their NDP MLA for just over six months for help. That MLA would not even return their phone call. Fortunately enough, they came to the Sundre constituency office and the staff there were great. They were able to reach out, and just a few short days later his wife was able to return to Canmore, where she remained for the remainder of her days, actually, close to her husband. He's passed away now.

But that's the type of service that we heard that NDP members gave their constituents, so I don't think that the hon. member should rise in the House and try to imply that the United Conservative Party members in any way are not keeping care of constituents. The now hon. Health minister told me this story when he took over his office: over 1,000 unreturned messages. So I don't think, Madam Chair, that they should bother going there. I think that's probably a little

bit of the pot calling the – how do you say that? Sorry; it's getting late.

An Hon. Member: The kettle black.

Mr. Jason Nixon: The kettle. Yeah. The kettle calling the pot black or the pot calling the kettle black.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to stop by and be part of tonight and partake in some sober debate here in the Legislature and offer some perspective on this particular bill and this particular amendment that we have before us. Seems it's been an interesting and entertaining evening. I had the opportunity to follow it earlier. Yeah. It's been interesting to listen along.

I appreciate this amendment that was brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Manning. I appreciate it for one particular reason. That's because multiple times in question period, here in this House tonight, over and over again, we have offered this government the opportunity to provide some level of clarity, some small sign of good faith to public-sector workers that what they claim their intentions with this bill are in fact the intentions they are going to follow through. And this government is refusing to do that. They have been offered the opportunity to stand in this House and make it clear that they will not use this legislation to impose a contract or to impose a wage rollback. They will not offer that guarantee. They have refused to state that on the record. They go back to talking about the intentions of this bill.

We have brought forward amendments like this one here, which, again, is providing this government with the opportunity to demonstrate to public-sector workers in Alberta that they are indeed approaching this in good faith. We'll see what they choose to do with it because so far, Madam Chair, I can't say that the record of this government and how they have approached this particular situation really gives the public sector any reason to give this government their trust or to believe that there is any good faith intended in this legislation which is being brought forward to break their contracts. Now, let's be clear about that. Whatever the government's intentions are, their means of achieving them are to break a contract.

Let's just step back for a moment and run down the timeline of how we arrived here. On June 11 we discovered that this minister had had his staff send out a letter to the bargaining units, which were anticipating and waiting at the table, asking them to sit down and have a consultation. They then also mentioned: well, if you don't, we've got this bill that we've already got ready hanging over your head. Even one step further back from that, Madam Chair, is that this government hid their plan from Albertans. During the election campaign they hid the fact that they intended to take this step, that they intended to break these contracts. They were not straight with Albertans.

Now, the minister stood earlier and claimed that, in fact, while in the campaign platform they promised that they were going to balance the budget and that they were going to practice fiscal restraint, within that general vague bromide was contained their intention to break this contract. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, this Premier has repeatedly stated what the standard is for whether or not one is hiding something from Albertans.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

He has made it very clear, Mr. Chair, that if you do not have something one hundred per cent explicitly stated in your campaign platform and then bring forward legislation to implement it, you have acted in bad faith, you have hidden something from Albertans, and you deserve to be punished for it. That is repeatedly on the record in this House, in the media, and indeed I believe even in their own campaign platform, so by their own standard and their own measure they already began in bad faith.

Then they bring forward this letter, again, which they send to the bargaining units, more or less saying: "Hmm. Nice contract you have here. Shame if something were to happen to it." Two days, two days, Mr. Chair, after sending that letter, after not a single actual conversation – pardon me; I take that back. There was apparently some contact between department officials and the bargaining units, brief contact. But two days later this minister rose in this House and he tabled legislation to break contracts. He tabled this bill on bad-faith bargaining. Then, to follow that up, not only did they not want to actually sit down, not only did they hide this from Albertans, not only did they not have the courage to actually sit down and have real consultation and conversation with the individuals involved; now they do not even want to have that conversation in this House. They are limiting the time as much as possible because they recognize that they hid this from Albertans, and they are hoping that Albertans will not notice that they can hopefully slip through this breaking of contracts, this bad faith, in the dark of night.

12:20

And, to top that off, these members are willing to sit and wear earplugs. The Premier himself distributed them to his caucus members. Perhaps he was concerned with what his members might say. He felt that they could not actually even listen to the opposition. I didn't know we were that convincing.

That said, Mr. Chair, that is the standard that's being set. And then this government has the gall to say: "Trust us. We're here to help. Trust us. We're here to help. Trust us. Ignore all that stuff over there. Ignore the fact that we have a blue-ribbon panel that's looking exclusively at how to cut money from the budget. Ignore the fact that we have punched a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in that same budget. Ignore the fact that we have repeatedly spoken so poorly of the democratically elected unions that represent our public-sector workers. Ignore all of that, and take it on good faith that this bill, on which we will offer no actual public guarantee, on which we will say nothing on the record to address any of your concerns – trust us that we're going to be okay on this."

I don't think public-sector workers in this province are going to do that, Mr. Chair, which is why we are here in the dead of night debating this bill, because this government is ashamed to actually have this public, to actually have Albertans watching. Indeed, the thing is that Albertans are watching and they are listening, which is why this minister is putting out videos on that platform, that apparently doesn't matter, trying to convince Albertans that, really, this is all okay but offering no new guarantees or information, not actually meeting any of the arguments but simply, again, saying: "Trust us. Trust us as we break your contracts. Trust us as we demonstrate our bad faith out of the gate. Trust us that our ends really will justify these means."

But Albertans aren't buying it, and they are paying attention, Mr. Chair. I was forwarded a message tonight from my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora that she received from one of her constituents and gave us the permission to read it here tonight. I'd like to do so.

That message reads: public-sector workers are Albertans; I am an Albertan; it has been my lifelong dream to work within Alberta's public sector since I was 12 years old; I finally made my dreams come true in 2018, something that took years of hard work and

sacrifice; I wanted to make life better for Albertans, but Bill 9 has completely betrayed my trust in this government; I would never have thought that this government would come after the food on my table, the clothes on my kids' backs; what is next? Are you coming after my job? I'm worried about my financial future and that I will suffer due to the desire to create a path forward; a deal is a deal; honour the rights of Albertans, all Albertans, not just the ones in the top 1 per cent; sincerely, a public servant.

You know, time and time again, Mr. Chair, we hear this government talking about needing to look after Albertans and somehow overlooking the fact that these workers are themselves Albertans. Now, I respect that this government indeed did get elected with a significant mandate and, in so doing, kind of cut a deal with Albertans on what they said that they would do. One of their promises was to balance the budget. They are claiming they can do so while pulling 4 and a half billion dollars out of that budget for a corporate tax cut, for which they have no returns for the next two years at least and no guarantees for anything beyond while planning to make cuts to services. They promised that they will maintain or increase funding for health care and education somehow, miraculously, and they claim that they will find efficiencies and that they will make these cuts and they will reduce their spending without impacting the delivery of public services. Indeed, they claim that they will improve them. That's a lot of big promises.

But what really undermines the faith, I think, of Albertans that they could deliver on that is when they immediately, as one of their first steps, come forward with something which they hid from Albertans during the election, which they knew they were going to do and did not tell Albertans that they would, when that is one of their first things, and that involves breaking the actual contracts that have been signed by the government of Alberta – but then they turn and say: trust us. Unfortunately, the record of Conservative governments in this province, Mr. Chair, has not been a friendly one with public-sector workers.

We've seen this time and time again. The price of oil drops. The government decides it must make cuts. We see reductions in service. We see cuts in programming. We see folks being laid off. We've seen Conservative governments that have gone after the pensions of public workers in the province in Alberta, and we've repeatedly seen Conservative politicians in this province use them as scapegoats, objects of resentment: "Look at your neighbour over there who works in the public sector. He didn't get laid off when the price of oil dropped. We need to make him feel some pain, too. His salary hasn't been cut. Of course, it also hasn't been raised in a number of years, but hey, you got hurt; we should hurt him, too."

That does nothing to help our economy, Mr. Chair. Ensuring that we have more Albertans who are earning less or perhaps not earning anything at all isn't going to support more local businesses. It isn't going to allow more people to keep their homes. For myself, Mr. Chair, I see no reason and this government has given me no reason to trust them on this. They have a lot of pretty words, and I will give this Premier that. He is a man who is good with his words. But because you hide something from Albertans with a smile on your face, it doesn't make you more trustworthy. The fact that you can dress it up in some fancy talking points and dance rather skilfully around the issue without actually addressing it: I think Albertans are starting to see through that.

That is why I and my colleagues are here tonight and why we're going to continue to debate this, and we are going to use every second of the time that this government has so generously allotted to us. Of course, we can recall all the comments from members of this government when they sat on this side of the aisle, when they

were concerned about an issue, and their deep and heartfelt protests about the abrogation of democracy when they were not given enough time and opportunity to speak. But we will continue to speak. We are continuing to put this out for Albertans. We're continuing to hear from public-sector workers. We saw an unprecedented unification of the leaders of our public-sector unions here at the Legislature just a few days ago. It goes back to years ago. You know, Premier Klein worked really hard to try to break that up. He tried to put the public sector at each other's throats. Well, kudos to this Premier. Not only did he unite the Conservatives in this province; he certainly united the public sector.

12:30

I'm not sure that this is a battle this government really wants to take on. I recognize the damage this is going to do, in my view – it's already begun to be done – the loss of faith that's already occurred with this government in the public sector, on whom, I remind the House again, as I have before, they are going to be dependent on achieving their incredibly lofty goals. Let's be clear, Mr. Chair. These are not new goals. If I took a shot every time a Conservative government in this province said that they were going to solve the budget deficit by finding efficiencies, well, I would not be able to stand in this Chamber, I can tell you that. This has been a repeated promise, over and over and over again, and not a single Conservative government in this province has managed to pull it off.

Now, of course, we have the much-praised Premier Klein, who himself went to battle with public-sector unions, and indeed he balanced the budget on paper. But he did that by drastically reducing services, by deeply cutting the public service, and by badly neglecting infrastructure across this province. As many have noted, it took years – and indeed I talk to public-sector workers today who work in laboratory tech, who work as paramedics, who work as nurses, and they tell me: we still have not recovered from the damage that Premier did, the capacity that we lost and never regained.

Even as this province went through the boom years and we drew population from across Canada and indeed from around the world, as we continue to do, we never caught up, and that is one of the reasons we have the expensive system we have today, because for all those workers that were laid off or who picked up and left Alberta, when Premier Klein all of a sudden had a little more cash in his pocket thanks to the rise in the price of natural gas, well, when they started hiring people back, it became more expensive.

Because governments chose to cut every time the price of oil dropped and to spend when the price of oil rose, we built infrastructure – not enough of it, mind you – and what infrastructure did get built got built at some of the most expensive times to build. Governments attempted to hide the fact that they were so dependent on the price of oil by cutting corners: promising lots of schools but not actually building them, tinkering around with the health care system, playing around with the edges, reorganizing this, reorganizing that, creating expenses, all the while . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, are there any others wishing to speak to A2? I see the hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Chair, I just feel compelled to stand and participate in this debate ever so slightly just due to the comments made by the hon. member. I represent the constituency of Calgary-Elbow, and there's one thing, when you knock on doors in Calgary-Elbow, that they take great pride in, the fact that Ralph Klein represented them for years. He held up the sign "Paid in Full." He set the foundation for Alberta to have years of prosperity. It is with

great pride that I rise as the now Member for Calgary-Elbow. Not a day goes by, when I go back to my constituents, where they don't tell me that they are proud of the fact that Ralph Klein, King Ralph, as they talk about him, was the Premier of this province, and they're looking for us to lead now in our time.

I also just want to say that I think we're at – what is it? – hour 15 of debate, Government House Leader, about hour 15, 16 now?

Mr. Jason Nixon: A little more than that.

Mr. Schweitzer: A little more than that? A little more than that.

I just also want to put on the record that after all the points raised – some of them have been well articulated; some of them, I would say, may not have been that well articulated – I still have not been persuaded. I still believe that Bill 9 is the way forward. We need this to have a responsible way forward, Mr. Chair, to make sure that we act responsibly, to make sure that we act in the best interests of Albertans, to make sure we have a reasonable path forward.

I'm going to be very brief and now sit.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre rising.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, I thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for his comments. I can tell you that when I knock on doors in my constituency, there is a very different opinion of Premier Klein, markedly different. But to each their own. Particularly when we're talking about historical figures, there can be many ways to view their records. Indeed, folks are open to their revisionism or to what aspects they want to look at or what aspects they don't.

I would also just note that my intention in standing and speaking here is not to convince the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow or any other member in this House. I recognize that these folks that are here are fairly early in their mandate. They recognize what brought them here, and they are going to do the bidding of their Premier. What I am here to do is to represent the voices of my constituents, who have overwhelmingly told me that they do not support this bill. They do not support this government acting in bad faith and choosing to break contracts and setting this as their precedent, their first action, in how they are going to work with public-sector workers in this province.

I'm here tonight and I'm engaging in this debate so that Albertans can know and understand what it is this government is choosing to do. Now, I regret that the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who's declared he's not going to be convinced, has to sit here and listen to my debate, whatever he might think of the quality of what I bring forward, but that's my job, and that's what I'm going to do.

Now, as I was saying, Mr. Chair, damage has been done to this province in terms of vilifying public-sector workers, of using them as objects of resentment, and, as I was noting, this government is going to need every single one of these workers onboard if they truly want to find efficiencies, if they truly want to improve these systems.

They can conduct their review of AHS. In some respects that's an admirable thing. Of course, there have been reviews that have been done. AHS has been around since 2009. Again, it was a creature created by previous Conservative governments, which, as I noted, love to tinker about with the health care system but never really seem to actually figure out how to begin to cut through the many layers that had accumulated on it over time and actually get down to better service delivery.

Indeed, for the past decade they were barely able to keep a minister in the portfolio for more than two years. There's hardly one that sat for a full term. I have to give credit to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora in that she lasted the full four years. In my

opinion, whether you disagree with her policies and the choices she made, I can't say that anyone could disagree with the fact that she knew her file and that she actually sat down and talked with all of the folks that worked in the different public sectors that informed her portfolio, that she was a minister that was on the ground.

I don't envy the Minister of Health for the work he's going to have to do and the water he's going to have to carry on behalf of this Premier when this is the first step out of the gate, when this is the tone that is being set for how we're going to work and negotiate with our public-sector workers in the health care field.

12:40

I can tell you that I'm already hearing from paramedics, from lab technicians, from nurses, from people all throughout our health care system about their frustration, about the fact that they are upset with this choice by this government, the fear that they have of what next steps this government is going to take. Again, we have given this government, as with this amendment that we have in front of us, the opportunity to offer some concrete reassurance to those workers. All we're asking here is that we actually give them some concrete dates, which, to be clear, Mr. Chair, they already had in a contract which was fairly negotiated at the table, signed, and completed. Now this government is introducing legislation to crack it open for their convenience without even a modicum of negotiation or discussion.

Now, as so many of my colleagues noted, of course, that's what this Premier said he was going to do. He was going to move quickly. He was going to have lots of stuff planned in advance. He wasn't going to tell Albertans what he had planned in advance – this particular piece: he made sure he hid that – but he was going to have it planned in advance so that he could move quickly to get past any potential opposition, so that no one would have time to stand up and question. Indeed, that's what we see happening with this bill.

What we are offering this government is the opportunity to maybe repair some of this damage that they've already started, to put a little bit of good faith back in on top of all this bad, that they're opening these discussions with our public-sector workers. This amendment simply says: "Okay. Well, you say that you can't do this date right now? Okay. Fine. You feel that you have to legislate and go in and break the contract? Fine. At least give them something to indicate that you intend to come back to this table."

The government refuses to give any sort of statement that they will not impose a contract and that they will not impose a wage rollback. They refuse to say it. They insist on keeping that option open in their back pocket, ready to pull out, hidden, much like they hid their intentions with this legislation. If they will not give the public sector at least that promise, at least that small bit of comfort in this era of uncertainty that they are now opening up for so many workers across the province of Alberta, they could at least agree that they would agree to some dates, at which point they will actually promise to sit back down at the table again.

That doesn't commit them to any actual action, Mr. Chair. All they're saying is, "We will sit down and talk to you at the table, starting between this date and this date." They can sit down at that table and say: "You know what? I'm sorry. We can't give anything more. We need to ask you to take a zero." They can sit down at that table and say: "You know what? We've looked at our budget, we've heard from the blue-ribbon panel, and we need to ask you to take a 5 per cent wage rollback." They can sit down at that table and say whatever they want, hold whatever position, negotiate from whatever position they want. This is simply a promise that they will do so and not simply arbitrarily make that decision, that they won't just sit down and say: "You get a haircut whether you like it or not. Your family is going to have less to live on this year regardless. No discussion."

We'll see, I guess, what this government chooses to do with this amendment. If they choose not to vote for this amendment – they keep saying: our intentions in this legislation are clear. Well, they are becoming clearer by the day, clearer by the minute. Clearer by the minute is probably more accurate. They're not allowing us an opportunity of days to discuss this. But I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that Albertans are watching.

During our four years in government we had a period of labour peace. We were able to sit down and negotiate with public-sector unions. We sat down to the table. We talked with them. Our negotiators from the government went and spoke, and we achieved agreements of zeros. Those were negotiated. That was with public-sector workers who had already taken zeros in previous years. We were able to do that in good faith: sit down, actually bargain with them, talk to them.

This government, right out of the gate, is burning that up. They're spending all of their capital right out, much like their corporate tax break. You know, they're gambling that 4 and a half million dollars, and they are all in. They're rolling those dice. I recognize that I'm mixing my gambling metaphors. On this, too, they apparently feel they've got enough political capital to spare that they can come, right out of the gate, breaking contracts with public-sector workers, which is saying: "If we want something, we'll simply legislate it. We're not going to sit down and talk about it. We're not going to discuss it with you. We're simply going to use the most powerful tool in our tool box to crush you." That is what this government is choosing to do.

Again, all we are asking for with this amendment, all we are offering is the opportunity for this government to demonstrate that – if it is not as dire as what I have been saying, if anything that I and my colleagues here have said is untrue, they have the opportunity to actually adopt an amendment that demonstrates that to be the case, to do more than simply say: "Trust us. Trust us on this policy, that we hid from Albertans, that we did not tell them we were going to implement because we knew what the reaction would be. Trust us that, really, this time when a Conservative government sits down and talks about, you know, needing to find efficiencies, it's not going to be borne on the backs of the workers." That hasn't been the record in this province, certainly not under the much-vaunted Premier Klein.

The fact is that this government is a big fan of offering overly simplistic answers to complex problems. That may win you an election, particularly when you hide the less savoury parts of your intentions and policies. But I'll tell you, Mr. Chair, that it is going to be much, much harder in practice, particularly when the government sets out on this kind of a fight, on this kind of bad faith right out of the gate. I mean, between this and Bill 8, this government is just out to burn up trust. I know that members are sitting here now, and members have risen in this House, and they've said: "Well, you know, actually, folks in my constituency aren't that concerned about this. I've even talked to a teacher or nurse or two, and they're okay with this."

What I would say is that this is the first brick in the wall. This is the first piece of what is going to prove to be a shaky foundation for this government. Maybe you don't feel it yet. But I'll tell you that there are nurses, there are teachers, there are correctional officers, there are paramedics and front-line workers in your constituency who are watching this, who are watching you. This is planting that first seed of doubt, and when your budget comes this fall, when you, hopefully, come back to the bargaining table – of course, you are unwilling to offer any guarantees that you will actually do that – they'll remember this. They'll remember what the first steps of the first action of this government were, and that trust is going to continue to erode. Those folks might be happy with you now, in the

warm, honeymoon glow after the election, but once the implications of these decisions that you're making begin to bear fruit, things aren't necessarily going to seem so rosy anymore.

12:50

But we have the opportunity here tonight with this amendment for this government to help mitigate that, for you to demonstrate to your constituents your good faith and your goodwill that you have in this Premier, that these members have in their Premier and their leader and in their minister. They're willing to take it on faith that what they are saying is what they are going to do, or perhaps they're aware that it's not, but they are willing to go with that, too. I can't say.

But here's an opportunity to demonstrate, for each of these members to demonstrate to the folks in their constituencies that this government intends to bargain in good faith with public-sector workers and that whatever they feel needs to be done, if they feel there needs to be sacrifice, they will sit down, they will look them in the eye and talk to them about it, that this government will be willing to actually go to the negotiating table and lay out their case and not simply, as they are choosing to do now, use legislation to ram it down the throats of public-sector workers and then go on a campaign of spreading further resentment, whether that's themselves personally or through their many proxies in conservative media in this province, folks who are more than happy to reprint the Premier's every word and press release.

I'm incredibly thankful, actually, for the legislative reporters that we have here in Edmonton, who I think do a fantastic job despite their clashes at times with ministers of this government and the Premier. I have great respect for the work they do. They are going to be here, and they're going to be covering this, too, and they're going to be letting Albertans know, as they have.

That is, again, part of why I and my colleagues are here tonight, because we intend to keep this story alive as long as we possibly can to ensure that Albertans understand the decisions that this government is making in bad faith, the incredibly poor precedent that it is choosing to set, and make sure that they are well aware and well clear that this is not a government that can be trusted, that perhaps they best be getting out their pickets, their cardboard, their markers and getting prepared because this government has yet to demonstrate at all on this bill that they are willing to show any semblance of good faith in how they are going to approach the livelihoods of folks that so many Albertans depend on.

The amendment is here. This government has an opportunity to demonstrate one last time, perhaps, what their intentions on this bill truly are. I look forward to seeing what they decide.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I would also take just a quick moment to mention that we are on amendment A2 at this time. I would never anticipate anybody's direction of debate, or I would not try to do that; however, having read the amendment, it does deal primarily with what look like schedules, so I would just mention that if this amendment was put to question, Bill 9 would also be available in totality to debate. It seems like we've given a wide berth with regard to every member's direction of debate, and that is also available to the House.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair. I will be brief. I will speak to the amendment, and once we vote on the amendment, after that I can speak to the bill again. I think it's an important and common-sense amendment, brought forward by my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Manning. The way I understand it, what this amendment

is doing is just reducing the time that's provided in the legislation, the time limit that government has set for September 30, 2019. I think this amendment is changing it to a shorter time frame. I think we have heard in this Legislature many times that this is something temporary. This is only for a short period of time, and the legislation itself refers to the report of blue-ribbon panel, that the final report will be available by August 15. That's the time frame they're looking at to, I guess, defer these agreements. If that's the intention as provided in the legislation, I think, then that's a reasonable amendment that provides government with a reasonable time to look into these agreements.

But I do want to say this on the record, that no amendment to this piece of legislation will make this legislation better, but at least this one provides a little bit of certainty, that what they are essentially saying, what they have shared with this House, what they are trying to achieve through this piece of legislation is exactly what will be delivered through this legislation. Since it's very clear in their legislation that they want to defer these agreements until they hear from the blue-ribbon panel – and that report will be out by August 15, and that will be the final report – this amendment sets out the time that should be enough for the government to consider that and if that is a temporary matter and if that's the only thing, that's the only purpose they're trying to achieve with this.

I think we need to take these amendments seriously, take this piece of legislation seriously because we know that this piece of legislation will impact one-fifth of their mandate. It's almost 200,000 Albertans, workers: front-line nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians, food inspectors, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, correctional officers, sheriffs. There are a lot of Albertans who are impacted by this piece of legislation. There are a lot of jobs that are at stake. There are a lot of rights that are at stake. Putting a proper safeguard, putting a proper timeline: it's important that we have that clarity in the Legislature. That's why this amendment is important.

I will urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this amendment, to vote in favour of those workers whose rights have been impacted. This amendment will make it at least a bit more certain, will reduce the time that government may take to look into these contracts. They will have the information they need, as stated in the legislation, and I think it's a reasonable amendment that all members should be voting for.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo standing.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. At this late hour I wanted to just, of course, echo some of the thoughts that were just put. The Member for Edmonton-Manning brought forward a very reasoned amendment, I believe, that just moves timelines up. You know, there are about 200,000 people that'll be impacted by this legislation, this bill to defer their arbitration rights, their ability to sit down with government and deal with contracts that are coming up for wage negotiations, 200,000 Albertans who are our neighbours.

1:00

They work in places throughout the province, as you can see from the schedule here and the various places that are identified: postsecondary, AHS, ABCs, government itself, and other workplaces – 200,000 Albertans, Mr. Chair, who are our neighbours, who we all know personally. My colleague from Calgary-McCall talked about what those professional designations are, and they're numerous. We all know people in those positions.

They're public servants. They're teachers. They work for agencies, boards, and commissions throughout the province. Two hundred thousand workers are about 5 per cent of the population of Alberta. If you take away the under-18 part of the population, that percentage goes up maybe to 10 or 15 per cent, so 1 in 6 working Albertans are affected by what we're seeing here before us today.

I would think that those 1 in 6 Albertans want greater certainty about how long they're going to be impacted by Bill 9, a bill to really rip up the agreed upon contracts that they have. The Minister of Finance said that the bill was designed to be as little an intrusion into the public sector as possible, but I would disagree. I think it's a massive intrusion into the public sector and the working lives of 1 in 6 Albertans who are impacted by this.

I want to understand why government didn't sit down across the table from representatives and talk to them about the issues that they're going through with regard to the preamble here, why they didn't talk to them about the significant changes that have occurred and lay that out for those representatives of the different unions that would negotiate with government.

The experience of our government was that we did sit down. We laid out the situation with regard to finances and where things were at, and what we were able to achieve was an understanding with those labour negotiators, and we were able to achieve a good deal for Albertans, a three-year deal for Albertans. This government doesn't seem to want to follow accepted practice, which is to sit down at tables and to negotiate. This government wants to use a heavy-handed approach with far-off timelines for getting back to the table. You know, the people that they'll be dealing with are already skeptical that the government is going to deal in good faith when they finally get back to the table. This is seen as something that's in bad faith, bad-faith bargaining, Mr. Chair.

I don't think this is a little intrusion into the public sector. I think 1 in 6 workers, who will be impacted by the delay of their collective agreements not being followed through with, can rightly say that they're believing that the government is acting in bad faith. You just have to scan websites for the different bargaining units that are identified here: HSAA, AUPE, TEBA. You just have to scan those websites to see what they're saying about this government now, and none of it is flattering. None of it is believing that they have on the other side of the table a good-faith partner who will sit down with them and negotiate fairly.

They're already setting up legal information pickets at different work sites around Alberta, and those will be coming up in the next two weeks. It's a way to further inform the people who are impacted by Bill 9 on what is going to be happening and what their actions together will be with regard to this government.

Mr. Chair, the numerous scheduling dates, moving them forward, is in a sense to give greater certainty, to shorten the timelines so that people around this province who are impacted by Bill 9 have less worry and less concern and less upset as a result of knowing that the government of Alberta has, essentially, ripped up contracts with them.

It's unprecedented in the last four years, Mr. Chair. This did not happen. As my friend down the way here from Edmonton-City Centre has said: the relative labour peace that was achieved was a new thing, the stability was a new thing. It was as a result of dealing with people fairly across the table, and they didn't come away from the table with massive increases. It was negotiated such that the times were very difficult. And if that is what the Finance minister is going to be saying to different labour groups when they get to the table, why doesn't he get there now? They have repeatedly said that they know what the books are like, they know what the economic conditions are like. Why don't they start talking at this point in time?

Mr. Chair, they are not talking, because, again, if you look at the websites for the different labour organizations, they're already talking about gearing up for the cuts that they believe will be coming as a result of this delay. So they've gone past the amount of time that's indicated here, and they are essentially saying that they know they're going to be at war with the government. That's not how we build a province. That's not how we build a province, on the backs of people, of workers, the workers for the government of Alberta, the workers for the agencies, boards, and commissions in Alberta, public servants in this province, who have for a long time given their everything to this province.

So I'm going to of course support the amendment. I'm going to believe that if members opposite want to assist their neighbours who are public servants around this province, that they will also support this amendment. There are a lot of public servants who work for the government of Alberta. Not all of them are covered by this Bill 9 – there are far more than that – but those public servants who aren't identified in Bill 9 are probably thinking that they're going to be dealt with in the same way, Mr. Chair, the same way that this government has shown that they are willing to deal in bad faith and rip up contracts, the same way that will get this government into deep trouble, like previous governments have been in the past with previous bills. That's not the kind of labour situation anybody needs or wants.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to sit down right now, but I do want us to support this.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A1? I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is standing to speak.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: My apologies. I believe that I might have said A1. This is obviously A2.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to stand and talk about the amendment that was put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. Certainly, we know that this amendment helps to keep a tighter timeline on the arbitration, the bargaining that we know is due at this point. I think that that's a very important amendment that we should all support because it is showing, certainly, respect for the process, following the regular process, and I just want to stand in support of it.

1:10

I just want to also say that I'm not a labour lawyer, but I certainly know what fairness and justice are, and this amendment moves us closer to fairness and justice whereas the bill itself moves us further away. So I just really do support my colleague's amendment and, of course, am standing in support of it.

It's challenging for me as a member to see sort of the Minister of Finance repeatedly rise in this House and declare that it's just a delay in bargaining, you know, and it's presented extremely innocently, like: oh, it's just a delay. But even in the bill itself it implies that there is deep concern about the salaries of public servants, so it's already foreshadowing some decisions that this government is going to make. We know, and many of my colleagues have said this repeatedly, that it seems like it's important to make sure that certain segments of our population get support right away whereas others, it's not so important. Public servants are some of those ones that aren't so important to this UCP government.

On this side of the House we certainly believe that the service that public servants offer Albertans is extremely important and needs to be respected. Of course, this bad-faith bargaining bill

doesn't do that, and the amendment brings it closer. You know, it makes it more fair, for sure.

We've heard over and over, too, that it's just a delay because we need to have more information. We're a new government; we need to have this panel look at the government finances and help us have direction. We know that sometime in August, mid-August perhaps, they will have their report. But, of course, the delay is October 31, 2019, so it's, like, much later than the report comes out, so somehow there's just some faulty logic, then. Like, well, how come it is so much later? Really, the government has been silent on that. They haven't told us, you know, why exactly. They certainly said that they need this report, so maybe they need a few weeks, maybe even a month to look at it, but October 31? I guess what's not said is that that will be after the federal election, and they don't want any bad news from Alberta. That's not been explicitly said, but there's nothing said to fill that gap, and I think it's a fair question. It's a question that Albertans are asking, and certainly I'm asking that because it is strange, the delay. That's certainly a concern.

This amendment will definitely bring sort of more fairness, justice, and respect for public servants.

I mean, this bill impacts the constituents in Edmonton-Riverview, which I have the honour to represent, pretty significantly. Edmonton-Riverview is a beautiful riding in central Edmonton, and like the name says, it does sort of hug both sides of the North Saskatchewan River. The University of Alberta is situated in it, the University hospital, the J.G. O'Donoghue Building, which has many government offices in it. It's got mature neighbourhoods like Windsor Park, Belgravia, Lansdowne. These are all beautiful parts of Edmonton. And then it goes across the river to Laurier Heights, Valleyview, Crestwood, and the Valley Zoo is in my riding. So this is really central. Besides the sort of larger institutions like the University hospital, the government's offices in the J.G. O'Donoghue Building – and I understand that community social services staff work out of those buildings; Alberta Infrastructure works out of those buildings – many staff work downtown, and it's a very short commute. You can take the LRT easily from McKernan, another community. I have a lot of public servants who work in the public service in my riding. As their representative in this Assembly I certainly am proud to stand very strongly against Bill 9 and see that this amendment is a way to make it a more fair bill. I mean, I don't support the bill at all, but I know my constituents are, you know, greatly impacted by that.

Certainly, when you think of the University of Alberta hospital, who's in the University of Alberta hospital besides the patients? It's all the staff. We have nurses. Are nurses impacted by this? They absolutely are. They're represented by the United Nurses of Alberta, and there are, you know – I don't know if I'm right in saying this – maybe thousands; maybe it's hundreds. I'm not sure, but there are a significant number of nurses who work at the University hospital every day dealing with very high-stress situations, helping people in life-and-death situations. Their work is very important, and they serve Albertans.

You know, I've said this in the House before, but about a year ago I was one of those people who was supported. I had a cancer diagnosis, and at first, when I went to emergency, it was tough and go. They didn't know if I was going to live, really. It was that close. But I had so many amazing United Nurses of Alberta staff serve me and really make a difference in my life, and I am forever grateful for that because I get to stand in the House today and speak about their important work.

I think that this government is forgetting who these people are. I've really been proud of my colleagues because everybody is being reminded of who these people are. They're Albertans. I think the government and certainly the opposition somehow would like to

dismiss these people as, “Oh, they’re union people” or something, that that’s somehow a bad thing. Well, certainly, on this side of the House we don’t see it that way.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Nurses, you know, work tirelessly to support Albertans in very difficult situations with high stress. They work shift work. Shift work can be very difficult for families and really challenging for them, but they are committed. They have chosen that path to be a nurse. But now it feels like, you know, a fundamental part about their work and their representation through the United Nurses of Alberta and the government of Alberta supporting them in their work – there seems to be a breakdown. It really saddens me to know that they’re sort of first on the chopping list. They’re, you know, a lower priority than other segments for this government, and I think that that’s a really horrific thing because these are people who support Albertans in very difficult times. I just want to certainly thank them, from my own personal experience, and I know of thousands of other Albertans who have received caring, professional treatment from these nurses.

Also, you know, other government workers that are impacted by this are people who are represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Some time ago I myself was one of those employees. I worked in child welfare, and I worked as a front-line social worker. I did become a supervisor in the time that I was there. This was, like, I would say, the early ’90s, and we all know what happened in the early ’90s. That was when Ralph Klein slashed public programs by 50 per cent. That devastated the public service and made our work very, very difficult.

1:20

I just want you to know who these people are who are working in child welfare. I think that certainly a lot of the members, when they were in opposition, were very concerned about, you know, if things are being done properly. Certainly, we had the devastating case of Serenity, a very young girl who lost her life in a very tragic situation. Of course, the professionals around that case: we need to make sure that they’re supported and make sure that they have good connections with supervisors and managers and make sure that proper assessments are done, all of that.

But having worked in child welfare and having dear friends that still work there, I know first-hand that several positions just stay vacant. Management doesn’t hire people. They’re trying to cut costs all the time. Supervisors aren’t available to front-line workers when they’re doing assessments. Managers aren’t available. They’re short-staffed. They don’t have a lot of resources to offer families a lot of times. Can you imagine being a front-line caseworker and having a caseload of perhaps 30 families? That’s a chronic issue working in child welfare. You know, these are multiproblem families. These are families who are very vulnerable and have significant issues. Certainly, I would say that Serenity’s family would be a good example of that, and obviously we know the very tragic circumstances around that.

Having worked directly in that area, I know first-hand just the tremendous dedication, the long hours, the weekends that these staff put in to make sure that families are safe. I think we would have much more tragedy, unfortunately, if we didn’t have these kinds of dedicated workers. Maybe we could have less, but this bill, again, sort of says to these people who are really – I mean, it’s not a job when you work in child welfare. You know, some people say that it’s just a job. It’s not a job. It’s a vocation; it’s a dedication. Myself, when I went home at night, I had trouble sleeping sometimes. I would do the best I could, but sometimes I couldn’t do everything I needed to make sure those kids and those families were safe.

It is disturbing that these are the people who are the first on the chopping block of this government. I don’t know; their work doesn’t seem to be honoured. I know that this amendment really helps us at least give a shorter time for us to focus on the importance of remuneration, the support for workers. You know, they have families of their own, they have lives of their own, and they need to be supported. There is tremendous service that they give, and I thank my friends regularly that still work in child welfare, that serve and go way beyond. I mean, I have a good friend who’s a supervisor, and oftentimes I can’t see her because she’s working the weekend. She says: oh, I’m too busy; I can’t make it this week. Here I am, an MLA, with kind of a busy life, too, but oftentimes it’s her schedule that prevents us, and that just shows her dedication. I would say that she’s not an anomaly. She’s routine. Many, if not all, of the staff do that. So this is how we reward them. This is how we reward them. I’d just caution the government to, you know, really remember who it is that we’re impacting by this and what the ramifications are.

Also, some of the contracts that are being delayed, the arbitration that’s being delayed: it does identify that in the bill itself. The Bethany Group in Camrose is impacted by that. Of course, I know the important work of the Bethany Group because I had previously been the Minister of Seniors and Housing. They do tremendous work with people who are living in affordable housing, our lodge program.

I just want to support the members to really realize who is being impacted by this, you know, significant delay. Of course, the union representing the Bethany Group is the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. In Camrose there’s the affordable housing, which is Jamieson Manor. I know that the Member for Camrose likely knows this very well. There are many lodges that the Bethany Group supports. Some members are representatives of the Autumn Glen Lodge in Innisfail, the Meadows lodge in Bashaw, the Big Knife lodge in Forestburg, Eckville Manor in Eckville, Lacombe Senior Citizens Lodge in Lacombe, Peace Hills Lodge in Wetaskiwin, Rosealta Lodge in Camrose. These are just some. This is the Bethany Group’s purview. They serve many, many Albertans in central Alberta. For many members in the UCP, these are in their constituencies.

You know, I certainly have heard from people how this is negatively impacting their work, and I’m sure that the members themselves would want to hear from their constituents about what this means. These people aren’t highly paid. They’re working to serve vulnerable Albertans. Knowing that there is an opportunity to review their contracts – we know that the cost of living goes up generally every year – you know, it’s fair for them to have an opportunity to have their salaries go up, too. This amendment really does create a bit of a tighter timeline so that the process can get going. It just shouldn’t be delayed. I’d just really caution the government that they are hurting people in their own backyards. I guess that is my point here. The Bethany Group does serve a large part of central Alberta, which many representatives do have constituents in.

Just the other day I was walking in the tunnel, and I ran into someone who I’ve probably known for 20 years. He works for the government of Alberta. I hadn’t really seen him through my whole time in government, but I just, you know, serendipitously ran into him walking in the tunnel. He said, “Oh, it’s good to see you,” and I said, “Likewise.” We chatted for a bit, and he told me: “I’ve never – I’ve never – seen the morale so low in the public service, and I’ve worked here for 30 years. I’ve never seen it so low.” So, again, members, please know what you’re doing. Please know what you’re doing. You are disrespecting the people who are serving you, serving all Albertans, serving Albertans in your constituencies.

And you know what? If people are stressed in their work, if people are not supported in their work, it's harder for them to do their jobs. In fact, they become less effective. Well-supported public servants: it makes a big difference. Of course, by this government deciding, you know, to say, "Well, we're going to delay this, and we're not going to open arbitration," that's a significant thing. These are things that the public servants are counting on. I mean, we all need to have support in our lives, and this is just a very clear indication from this government that these are not people that they really respect.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise this morning, I guess it is, in the Chamber to speak to the amendment to Bill 9 that we've been having under consideration for some time now. Many folks have spoken quite passionately about it. I wish to add my comments to the arguments made so far and express my large disappointment in this government although I'm not shocked this government has gone in the direction they have. But I certainly am disappointed that indeed they've carried through to demonstrate what I expected they would in their first acts of legislation when it came to legislating in the field of labour law here in the province.

1:30

I think, Madam Chair, that there could be no more illustrative imagery produced, that nothing would illustrate more clearly than what was demonstrated today in the Chamber or more colourfully played out in this House tonight than that action of the Premier when he demonstrated his government's attitude towards working people in Alberta by participating personally in handing out orange foam earplugs to members of his caucus so they wouldn't have to suffer the indignity of listening to opposition members and voices who dare to stand in opposition to his centrepiece bad-faith bargaining bill.

In fact, members in this House on the government side pointed gleefully to their ears to demonstrate they were still wearing their orange foam earplugs, and some are doing that right now, happily suggesting that they really have no intention of listening to the voices of those working people they're attacking with this legislation tonight and throughout this whole process of implementation of Bill 9 to basically put to rest any opposition that working people and, particularly, public servants who are under contract negotiations might wish to mount to this government's onslaught against their rights to negotiate fairly.

I have mentioned in this House before an article in the *Financial Post* from November 2014 by Drew Hasselback titled *Supreme Court of Canada Imposes General Duty of Good Faith in Contract Performance*, where it's established, in that case, the case of *Bhasin versus Hrynew*, that the court said that Canadian contract law comes with a duty of good faith that requires parties to perform their contractual obligations honestly and to act in good faith no matter what side of the contract you're on.

This government is certainly not living up to the dictates of that Supreme Court case, which very clearly stated the obligation of all parties to contracts in this country and, specifically, to employment contracts to live up to the terms of those contracts in good faith, to bargain in good faith. This bill, that we've dubbed the bad-faith bill, is certainly diametrically opposed to the spirit if not the letter of that Supreme Court case, which in 2014 clearly spelled out what the actions of a government must be in terms of respecting the laws that are in place and the contracts that they have in place with their public service. They have to demonstrate their good faith and their

intention to deal in good faith, not to break a contract, not to deal in bad faith and disregard the clear legal descriptions placed in the law of the land by the Supreme Court of Canada. That prescription was to clearly follow the law and deal in good faith with parties to a contract. This piece of legislation is one which certainly is a clear demonstration of the government's disrespect for the Supreme Court's dictate to deal in good faith.

I know that in my working career I've been subjected to the ignominy of a party to a contract dealing in bad faith, where overnight the wages that I was paid were cut from, I think, 13 bucks an hour to nine bucks an hour because one company changed, the contract went from one company to another, and the law allowed them not to respect the contract that was in place. All the workers of that DATS bus driver system that I was a member of lost a significant amount of their paycheque overnight because labour legislation in this province allowed that contract that was in place to be disrespected. This is another example of the type of labour legislation that I've been living under all my life in the province of Alberta. I was doing my best and will continue to do my best to represent the working people and the public servants who work in my constituency to oppose these draconian measures, which are totally disrespectful of the law of this land. Notwithstanding the fact that the government can pass legislation and make it legal, it doesn't make it any more respectful of working people in this province.

It's an image that I can't get out of my mind, the Premier of this province walking around the House doling out orange earplugs so that members of his caucus won't have to listen to the opposition and, in turn, the people that they represent. I think that in all probability a gentleman named Malcolm Mayes is right now scribbling with his orange felt pen the large earplugs that the Premier was handing out in this Legislature. I can only imagine the political cartoon that he might come up with in the coming days, maybe even tomorrow, in the publications that he's a part of.

I hope that he comes up with one of his more charismatic cartoons, to really show the image that I have in mind, of our Premier reaching out to shake the hands of organized labour with a set of big, fluffy, orange earplugs stuffed into his ears, demonstrating that he's got no interest in listening to what they have to say while at the same time he's trying to do a deal with them. It's a pretty strong image in my mind, and I think that it's one that's going to stick with me if not every Albertan who happens to hear about the incident tonight where our Premier was handing out earplugs to his caucus so that they wouldn't have to listen to the opposition. Unbelievable. I couldn't believe that that was taking place, but indeed it has. It's historical, and it'll go down in the annals of our memory for a long, long time.

It reminds me of a story, and I've read this story to kids that I've visited in schools. I didn't realize that the book that I had as a child talking about *Top Cat* was such a serial book. This *Top Cat* series of books, of which I only had one, spoke about a group of stray cats who lived in a city, and they followed a leader named Top Cat. Top Cat was the leader of the band, and there were cats like Choo Choo and Benny and Fancy-Fancy. They were playing, and they were following their leader, Top Cat. They lived in the back alleys of the city, and they clanged together ashcan lids – bang – making a heck of a racket. One of the featured characters in the *Top Cat* book series – if you're a person of a certain age, you might recall – was Officer Dibbles, a police officer who was local to the neighbourhood. Of course, Top Cat and his gang of cats were clanging together their ashcan lids and making a heck of a racket, and Officer Dibbles said: "You can't do that anymore. You can't make that kind of noise anymore, Top Cat. You've got to get out of the alley."

The Chair: Hon. member, please sit for a minute. There is a standing order that does not allow you to bang on your desk, hon. member.

Mr. Dach: I was trying to demonstrate the clashing of the ashcans together.

The Chair: Additionally, I'm having a hard time figuring out what this wonderful *Top Cat* story has to do with the amendment that we're on.

Mr. Dach: It has to do, Madam Chair, if I may . . .

The Chair: I will appreciate it if you get to the point of the amendment rather quickly.

Mr. Dach: I will do so. I'll speed it up.

The Chair: Please proceed, hon. member.

Mr. Dach: Thank you so much. I will do my very best to do that.

Anyway, long story short, Madam Chair, to get to the point, Top Cat got kicked out of town for being too noisy, and he decided to take his gang of cats out to the countryside. They didn't like it – they got stung by bees, they got tripped up into the water, and the bull in the pasture gave them trouble – so they went back to the city. What they did when they got back to the city: they invoked Top Cat's great big idea to solve the problem. They gave Officer Dibbles a pair of earmuffs so he wouldn't have to hear the clanging of the ashcans. So that's what it was. That's what it was.

The Chair: Hon. member, back to the amendment now.

1:40

Mr. Dach: To the amendment, we're basically saying that this amendment would allow the government to take their earplugs out and listen to the people who they're negotiating with and have a little more respect for those individuals, those families that those people represent. I know what it would have been like had my father had to come home as a union carpenter . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, this is your last opportunity to speak to the relevance of this amendment that we are on.

Mr. Dach: All right. Well, I certainly thought the amendment that we're talking about, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act amendment, was going to be changing the timelines of the invocation of the effort of the government to have the blue-ribbon report heard first and then engage in arbitration later. That is what I'm getting at, that they weren't listening to individuals who were telling them: "We need to be respected. Take the earplugs out of your ears, and listen to working people, who need to end up in a position where they can trust that their government is going to respect contracts that they've entered into, that their bad-faith contracting practices cannot be accepted, that the Supreme Court dictates that as a government or as a contractor or an employer, you must respect the contracts that are agreed to by both parties. Those are the rules of this country, and indeed if you wish to engage otherwise, you're going to suffer the wrath of voting people."

But this Premier, this government, doesn't seem to care. They think that they can craft and cobble together a government, a majority in this province, repeatedly by not having to rely on the vote of organized labour. I think they do make that calculation at their own peril. In fact, I'll do my very best in my constituency to ensure that that peril exists for them for many terms to come. People in my constituency, Madam Chair, are really, really concerned that

their voices are not being listened to with respect to this government and its attitude towards arbitration and when, in fact, that is going to be happening.

The ruse that this blue-ribbon panel has to meet first in order for the government to have its information all together before they can make a decision on whether there's enough in the cupboard to pay what working people have fairly negotiated: that's something that working people aren't going to accept. It indeed is something where I couldn't imagine the Premier thinking of the kids in a working person's family, in a public-sector family, when that mother or father goes back home and the child sees them and wonders: "Why are mom and dad so upset? Like, what's the problem? Why are they not happy?"

What's the conversation around the dinner table? As a parent you've got to look your child in the eye and say: "Well, the government passed a law, and it said that the agreement that they entered into – they just tore it up. Well, that's the law of the land. They can do it. They said that they were elected to do that, and that's what the government did. That's democracy, young son, young daughter. That's what they did to us. Consequently, we're not going to be able to, you know, take that weekend to see your grandparents, or we're not going to be able to perhaps have the second pair of good-quality outfits that you'd like to have, or you're not going to be able to play hockey this year because the raise that we were going to get is not going to happen. I'm sorry. We thought we were going to end up having a bit of a raise. I know that we've gone for three years, Andrew, Angela" – whatever the child's name is – "and we agreed for three years to not take any kind of a raise. In return, we thought we were getting a bit of an increase this time round, but no. The government said that they don't have to respect the law, that they can just change it, because that's democracy, that they can tear this contract up. So me and John and Pete and Mary and other people that I work with are going to get together and tell their kids the same story, that democracy in this country means that you don't have to follow the dictates of the Supreme Court."

You just go your own way because you said that you had that in your election platform, and you just rip up that contract and change the law overnight and say: too bad, so sad; this is what we're going to do.

I, for one, am at a loss to describe to anybody or anybody's kids the rationale behind a government and a Premier who would, with a straight face, be able to stand up in front of a classroom of children, maybe even children who visit this Legislature to come to the School at the Leg. for a week, and explain to them exactly what it is that is behind their thinking when they say to parents and those children: "We had a deal, but we're going to rip it up. Your parents, your mom and dad, were going to get a slight increase this year. It was going to be an arbitration that happened if we couldn't come to an agreement, but the wage clause was going to be opened up, and they could anticipate getting an increase this year after three years of taking no increase in an effort to show everything they could. They knew finances were in a bind and that other people in this province were suffering and that other workers were without work, so for three years they took zeros in negotiated increases, yet in this year of the contract, where it promised in the contract to open it up and actually perhaps negotiate an increase, no, no, that's off the table. In fact, the deal is torn up, and we don't care whether the courts suggest" – not suggest; the courts tell us – "that we have to honestly and fairly bargain. We don't care about your parents, and we particularly could care less whether the children and your brothers and sisters get a little bit less after three years of getting no increase at all."

I'd really like to see our Premier, in a classroom of grade 6ers who come to visit our Legislature, explain that one. He may have no trouble at all looking at our opposition members across the way

and explaining, with a straight face, that they're out there to balance the books and that they were given that mandate to do that. But tell that to a group of grade 6ers who come and wonder why their parents don't have an opportunity to have a bit of an increase after three years of negotiated no increases. I think that might be a little bit more difficult audience for the Premier to hold sway with. I mean, you can't find a more honest audience than young people and children. I'd pay money to see that, actually – I really would – on top of a caption of Malcom Mayes showing the Premier of the province handing out earplugs or perhaps wearing a set of his own. That's an image that won't leave my mind.

I really think that the amendment that's been put forward to stifle – the initial bill to stifle the opportunity for the public-sector workers who are under these contracts, who expect to have their rights taken away, is somewhat blunted by this amendment that has been brought forward to change the timelines and allow the government to do in one way what it wanted to do, and that's basically to get beyond hearing their blue-ribbon panel.

1:50

The Chair: Hon. members, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm rising in the House to take the opportunity to speak in favour of this amendment. By looking at this amendment – I think we couldn't do more than this. By presenting, proposing this amendment, my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning shows not only a very reasonable and common-sense amendment; she also shows the act of, you know, how positive and co-operative an opposition we are. By proposing this amendment – but it reflects, like, that we almost agree to what this government is trying to do through this bill after days of debate and just only want to make sure that we don't sit back after passing this bill. The processes still keep going. By tightening the time limit on this bill, we'll make sure that we don't forget about it.

By not showing the courage to accept this amendment, it reflects something on this government, that they're very, very committed to get through something. They had it very hidden from day one as this was not even on their election platform.

I just wanted to be brief as I know that I will probably come back to the original bill. So I just wanted to be on the record that I support this amendment, and I request each and every member of this House to show the courage, please, to vote for this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will speak as long as I can although I have a feeling that we'll be stifled in a matter of minutes. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment, which is attempting to amend a completely flawed bill. Not just flawed, Madam Chair; this bill is a direct attack on working people. I don't believe for a moment that this is about delaying, as the government has proposed or offered as an explanation. Essentially, what this is is an excuse for the government to shirk its responsibilities of good-faith bargaining with the unions in order to allow the blue-ribbon panel to come back to say: "Yeah. You know what? We can't afford to sit down and negotiate in good faith, not to have it predetermined."

But what I find rich is that one of the first moves this government did was to introduce a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax cut. So there are dollars for that but not a willingness to negotiate. I'm not saying: give the 4 and a half billion dollars over to the men and women of this province. But they do deserve a government that will negotiate in good faith. This is why we have dubbed this bill the

bad-faith bargaining bill. I mean, that's even a very sensitive way of framing it. It's quite unbelievable that what this bill does is attack the over 200,000 men and women that provide critical services for all Albertans.

This Premier and this government have the audacity to not just disrespect them but to not even sit down with them at the bargaining table and to bring in legislation in the dark of night. In fact, second reading started, I believe, a couple of minutes after midnight one evening. The government is passing this bill at breakneck speed, with three readings within a couple of days. You know, the Premier and others will talk about the hours of debate. I didn't realize that democracy had a time frame or a time limit on it. If you pass over a certain number of hours of debate, well, you can check the box that you've allowed members to speak.

Again, it's extremely rich considering that the Premier, when he was an opposition member in Parliament, railed against closure and time allocation as a member yet now, as Premier, has no problems using it, including a number of members – the Minister of Environment and Parks, as well, I quoted in second reading, who was, you know, quite upset at this concept of limiting debate and democracy . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, we have already debated this matter. Please move on.

Mr. Bilous: It relates to this bill as far as how quickly we are passing it.

The Chair: The debate on that motion has already been settled. It is not relatable to this bill.

Mr. Bilous: It's relatable and will be in a matter of about a minute, when we then move into third reading, which has closure on it as well.

You know, this bill is an awful piece of legislation and unnecessary, quite frankly. I mean, really, this is just an excuse to pave the way for a blue-ribbon panel to come back to government, and for the government . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 23, agreed to on June 19, 2019, I must now put every question necessary for the disposal of Bill 9 at this stage.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

On the remaining clauses?

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 9 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:57 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Issik	Rowswell
Dreeshen	Jones	Sawhney
Ellis	Kenney	Schow

Fir	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Long	Singh
Glasgo	Madu	Stephan
Glubish	McIver	Toews
Goodridge	Milliken	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Horner	Nixon, Jeremy	Wilson
Hunter	Orr	Yao
Against:		
Bilous	Dang	Sabir
Carson	Deol	Shepherd
Ceci	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Phillips	
Totals:	For – 33	Against – 11

[The remaining clauses of Bill 9 agreed to]

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 9. 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 Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 9

Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance is rising on debate.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise tonight to move third reading of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

The intent of Bill 9 is to simply postpone wage reopener arbitration hearings until October 31, 2019. It will temporarily delay hearings for 24 public-sector collective agreements. I've said this before and I'll say it again: this is not a cancellation of arbitration hearings, nor is it about wages. This is a procedural delay, full stop. It's a four-month postponement of the process. This bill and any regulations that might need to be created would not determine wages.

The proof is in the bill's heavily discussed preamble. Yes, the preamble talks about balancing the budget, but it also talks about providing high-quality front-line services for Albertans, and it talks about significant changes that have happened in Alberta's economy. Mr. Speaker, it talks about the time that we need, time to gather information about Alberta's economy both from the MacKinnon panel and from other information sources. The intent

of Bill 9 is described in the whole preamble, not just the parts that some in this House like to talk about.

Mr. Speaker, there's no denying that Alberta's public sector does important work. We have great respect for what they do for Albertans every day. They need to know that we are not denying their right to arbitration, just postponing the process temporarily for four months. We need more time to consider Alberta's economic situation. That's really what we're looking for here. It would be fiscally irresponsible if we proceeded with arbitrations without making an informed decision. It's not a fair process when one side doesn't have all the information they need. And it would be unfair and, frankly, disrespectful to Albertans if we represented their interest without having examined the province's economic situation first.

Putting forward this legislation was not a step we took lightly. But we urgently needed more time: more time to understand the impacts of our rapidly changing economic situation, more time to receive and review the MacKinnon panel's recommendation, and more time to plan our path forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues in this House who are supporting fiscal responsibility and informed decision-making through their support of the bill. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 9 this evening? The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will rise to speak to this bill at this late or early hour. Unfortunately, this will be my last opportunity to speak to this bill. I know that that disappoints most members in this Assembly.

It's frustrating when, you know, members of the opposition especially but all members have such limited time to debate a bill but also limited time to go out and consult. I mean, this is one of the main points that the opposition, the current government but when they were in opposition, made as far as trying to send most if not all bills that our government put forward to a committee. Their argument was that they needed time to go out and consult with Albertans, consult with their constituents.

2:20

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that this bill was introduced, I believe, on Monday. It feels like this is a three-day bill. Now, I recognize the fact that there have been unique circumstances in the history of this province and of this place, where there, I believe, are four bills in the history of the Alberta Legislature that were passed, all three readings unanimously, in one day. That required unanimous consent of the House. In fact, the last bill was the recognition of the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day that our government brought forward and with unanimous consent of all opposition parties passed all three readings in one day. I believe the bill previous to that was one brought in by the hon. Gene Zwozdesky when he was minister, which recognized the Holodomor, or the death by starvation that happened to millions of Ukrainians under the Stalinist regime. So there have been a couple of different bills that have passed, but, again, those required unanimous consent.

I can tell you that this current government knew that the opposition would not give unanimous consent to attack working people. Because of their agenda, which I'll speak about shortly – because I think it's important that Albertans and even the members of government, the government backbench, are aware of the real reason that the government is pushing this through at breakneck speeds. You know, I mean, if this was just a matter, as

the Minister of Finance says, of delaying negotiations until we get a better picture of Alberta's finances – although that's quite rich considering this government was very, very quick to introduce a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax cut. You'd think that may have a little bit of an impact on the bottom line of the balance sheet.

But, regardless, it's convenient that as we speak, there are three different public-sector unions that have been negotiating with the government, and I believe that they will go into binding arbitration if this bill is not passed and proclaimed by this weekend. What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the reason for this breakneck speed isn't just to delay talks; it's to ensure that the government won't be going into binding arbitration with these three different unions. Of course, the reason for binding arbitration is to ensure that there is an agreement reached and a fair agreement for both sides.

Really, this is an attack not just on those unions but on, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, working people. For me it's frustrating to have our time of debate in this House limited. If I'm not mistaken, we have less than two hours to speak to this bill. We had six hours in committee. Despite the fact that the Government House Leader claims that there wasn't closure brought in on second reading, there wasn't time allocation brought in but there was closure. By moving the previous question, it ensured that the opposition couldn't make any amendments, either a referral or a reasoned amendment, to ensure that members, all members, have an opportunity, an ample opportunity, to speak to this. For me the frustration is that second reading started a little after midnight and, once again, we're now in third reading at 2:25 in the morning, when most Albertans are sleeping, and the government is trying to pass this as quickly as possible.

Now, I appreciate that our government did in one bill bring in motions for closure, which I'm sure the Government House Leader will be very quick to point out, which I do recognize. However, we did not pass or attempt to pass the bill in three days' time. What it does is that it basically handcuffs and inhibits private members', including the opposition's, especially the opposition's, ability to go out and talk to Albertans about it to ensure that there aren't unintended consequences.

Again, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board talks about how this merely just delays arbitration and does not dictate an outcome. I would contest that if that was the case, then the one section, section 5(c), shouldn't be in this bill, which allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council, cabinet, to make regulations "respecting any other matter that the [cabinet] considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act." You know what that does, Mr. Speaker? To put it into plain language, that gives the Premier and Executive Council the ability to not just impose contracts on public-sector workers; they can also impose rollbacks on public-sector workers. That is a direct attack on working people and the people who provide incredibly important services to all Albertans.

Now, I respect the fact that maybe the intent of the government is wanting to look at ways to be a little more cost-efficient or cost-conscious when they're looking at the global budget. But, again, you can't have one action where you race out and give up 4 and a half billion dollars of your budget for one sector or group, yet on the other hand tell another that you're absolutely hitting the brakes. I mean, the reality is – and the Minister of Finance and the Premier will know – that when we sat down to negotiate with the public sector, that was on a bunch of contracts that came up at the depths of the recession, and in good faith our government sat down with them, and they agreed to for the most part taking zero per cent increases.

But the point of this, Mr. Speaker, is that it was agreed to. It wasn't legislated. It wasn't shoved down their throats. It wasn't imposed on them. It was done through good faith and through bargaining and through sitting down with them. This government clearly has little respect for our public sector. For me it's quite frustrating. Then to rub salt into a wound, stifling debate and invoking closure at every stage of this bill, quite frankly, is undemocratic.

I want to read to you, Mr. Speaker, a few quotes from – now, let's see here. I believe it is the Premier who said this in his role in the federal House of Commons. On December 8, 1998, he had said:

The minister said that this bill respects the finest traditions of the parliamentary system. If that is the case, then why did he cut short democracy? Why did he cut short democratic deliberation when it came to this bill?

On the same day, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed said:

The government announced its intention to invoke time allocation on both the report stage and third reading only two hours into the debate. I must say that while I commend the minister for the work that he, his officials and his parliamentary secretary have put into this bill, I think it is disappointing, to say the least, that the government has, in passing such a critically important piece of legislation, so carelessly and callously disregarded the best traditions of democratic deliberation in this place.

Again on May 27, 1998, Mr. Speaker, the Premier had said in his former role:

I begin by condemning this government for allowing itself to trample on democracy and democratic deliberation by invoking closure and time allocation on [at that time] Bill C-36.

Mr. Speaker, on November 2, 1999, the Premier said:

Mr. Speaker, there we have it. They always blame it on the rules, but when it comes to an option to expand debate and to listen to the diverse voices of a pluralistic society, government members say no, no, no every time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good one. I can't believe this wasn't ruled unparliamentary. Back on November 2 as well the Premier in his former role as a Member of Parliament said:

Mr. Speaker, I would not deign to suggest that member is a thief. He voted with his colleagues to take from me the right to speak on that bill by limiting debate through time allocation.

2:30

An Hon. Member: It seems relevant.

Mr. Bilous: It seems relevant. It seems a little rich that when the shoe is on the other foot, Mr. Speaker, at that point it's an affront to the democratic right of members, but when the Member for Calgary-Lougheed has the privilege of being in the Premier's chair, well, I guess those rules don't quite apply. There are words for that.

This is quite interesting. My list of excerpts of the hon. Premier is not ending at all. We have . . . [interjection] I'm sure that the Member for Calgary-Hays is very interested to hear me quote his leader. From May 25, 1998:

It is regretful, and I say this as a new member, that the government has failed to restrain its excessive use of what really should be a very rare lever to limit debate in this place.

Now, that's the Premier. I mean, my goodness.

Let's get on to the Minister of Environment and Parks when he was an opposition member. Back on December 9, 2015, the now Minister of Environment and Parks, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre:

Now, Madam Speaker, as you no doubt know, the government chooses not to speak to their bills. That's unfortunate. I can see why they would want to end debate and go home, but the people

that sent me here and have sent my colleagues in the Official Opposition party as well as the third party and independent colleagues in this Assembly, our constituents, have made it clear that they want us to speak to this bill. They want us to debate this bill because it affects their lives.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that there are over 200,000 men and women whose lives are being affected by this piece of legislation about which clearly, by the actions of this Premier and government, they don't care.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was quite articulate when he said on December 9, 2015:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP is pulling every trick out of their book to ram through legislation that farmers and ranchers are simply asking to be consulted on . . .

Probably, similarly, the men and women whom this piece of legislation is going to impact would like to be consulted. That was my own addition for *Hansard*.

. . . tricks that the NDP once railed against. Once upon a time the Government House Leader said that, quote, this time allocation thing is a way for the government to short-circuit democracy. Premier, we've seen consultation ignored, debate muzzled, and now democracy subverted. Is there any principle you won't sacrifice to ram through your agenda?

Well, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I wonder how the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat feels today about what his government and his Premier are doing.

Mr. Speaker, it's insulting. It's insulting to millions of Albertans, who elected all of us to this place to speak on their behalf, to have that debate stifled, to have closure invoked on our right. Quite frankly, it's not just the act of time allocation but the speed at which this bill is going through. In fact, if the shoe was on the other foot, I'm sure the former Wildrose Party would have spared no expense to put on a massive advertising campaign.

In fact, I think the last time that we did invoke closure was during Bill 6, and we know that there were thousands of people that came down to the Alberta Legislature. With that bill, despite the fact that there was closure, there was much more time for the members to go out and talk to their constituents. In three days' time, Mr. Speaker, it is extremely limiting for us to be able to engage members. The other thing is that I'm not sure what time we would be engaging our constituents, considering that we are spending, you know, copious amounts of time in this place.

Mr. Speaker, I think the government still has an opportunity to do the right thing and vote down this bill, to sit down with our public-sector unions, that provide such critically important services to this province, and show them, through actions, that they respect the work they do. I find it insulting and, I think, so do many of the spokespeople for labour. When the Minister of Finance stands up and says, "We respect the work that they've done; we appreciate it," well, you sure have a funny way of showing it, Minister. For me, my understanding of respect would be to sit down with them and to bargain in good faith, not to pull these types of heavy-handed moves. I wanted to say "shenanigans," but that almost makes light of it.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that we have in this bill. Again, we know that it's affecting 24 different collective agreements and will impact a number of different folks. To contrast, what our government did for years in this province – there wasn't any labour unrest. In fact, again, as I had mentioned, we were able to sit down in good faith with teachers, with nurses, with support staff to ask and negotiate and came to – I mean, obviously, those folks are very, very understanding. Teachers took zeros three years in a row and did that with the thought and hope that the future round of negotiations, as the economy started to improve, would at least mean that the government would have the courage to sit down with them and bargain. If you ask me, it is a cowardly act to ram through

legislation which strips the rights of working people in this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, for the past four years we've listened to a number of members who now sit in the government caucus talk about their disdain for unions, their attack on the very value and purpose that unions serve, which, of course, is to ensure that their members are represented with a collective voice, which is much stronger than coming back as individuals.

Quite honestly, I lost my train of thought right there, Mr. Speaker. These things happen at this time of day although I'm sure one of my colleagues can help me get back my train of thought here.

Mr. Dach: Talk about the children.

Ms Phillips: Is there a Top Cat in this story?

Mr. Bilous: I don't think I could discuss or retell that story that the Member for Edmonton-McClung so eloquently shared with all members of the Assembly.

Again, I just want to draw attention – I'm sure my time is coming to a close – to that section of the bill which does much more than what the Finance minister is sharing with this House, saying that this merely delays negotiations with the public sector. Again, that's section 5(c), which likely will be unconstitutional, Mr. Speaker. What this government is doing under a guise of, "We need to look at our numbers": again, if that was the case, why doesn't that apply to the 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax cut that you folks so quickly pushed through? You can't have it both ways.

So I call on all members to oppose this bill.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak in debate? I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a) – no, on the main bill itself. I forgot that the hon. Opposition House Leader does not have 29(2)(a), so I will take this opportunity to respond to a couple of the comments that he had made. It appears that we're now debating closure. I'm unaware of a closure motion at the moment on third reading of Bill 9, but I guess that's where we're at now, so we could spend maybe the next few hours discussing a hypothetical closure motion.

2:40

The hon. Opposition House Leader spent some time talking about the fact that he believes that when he was in government, just a few short weeks ago and over the last four years, they only used time allocation once. I hate to be the one to have to inform him of this, but he is wrong about that. Interestingly enough, the last time that the last NDP government used the time allocation motion, it was to force a vote on the Alberta Election Commissioner being put into place.

I know that my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is laughing because he remembers that debate, which got quite heated in this place. He talks about what was an issue where there were certainly some concerns that were being raised by the then opposition of the day in regard to that appointment. We felt that it was important for us to be able to spend some time debating that issue and having a conversation about whether or not that was the right direction for the Legislature to go. Interestingly enough, because of that, the government at the time decided to bring in time allocation after six hours.

Now, the hon. Member for – at the time she had the pleasure of being the Deputy Government House Leader, and I believe the hon.

member's riding changed, so I'm just checking, Mr. Speaker – Calgary-Mountain View, who was then the Justice minister and Deputy Government House Leader, said: "We began debating the motion [yesterday]. It has been debated multiple times, for a total of about six hours." She then proceeded to move a time allocation motion for one hour, so seven hours on just that. There are several – several – examples of the NDP, when they were in government, moving time allocation. It's happened before. Now, I personally think that it should be used sparingly by a government.

I always appreciate when the hon. Opposition House Leader is quoting me. I do appreciate that he takes time to read my comments in *Hansard*. I knew somebody was.

Mr. Bilous: Over and over.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yeah. But the reality is that those comments were made about a piece of legislation that we felt was important to us when we were in opposition, and I respect that the Opposition House Leader feels that this is an important issue for him to be able to speak about. I think, though, Mr. Speaker, that it's important that we're clear, again, though, that there's been lots of opportunity provided to the opposition, and there will continue to be more opportunity for the opposition.

We started on this legislation, Mr. Speaker, last week, not this week. The opposition continues to say that this bill was brought in on Monday. It was not. It was brought in on Thursday of last week. We were in this Legislature until about 3 o'clock a.m. on Monday night. We were in the Legislature last night till about 2:30, accommodating the opposition, again to give them as much opportunity for them to be able to spend some time on this legislation. And now here we are again, at a quarter to 3, still working on this legislation on behalf of the people of Alberta. I thank the opposition for participating in that process. I hope that they continue to do it. But I still remain concerned that the majority of the time that the opposition are speaking about Bill 9, a bill that they continue to indicate that they're concerned about, they're actually not speaking about Bill 9.

I think that's what brings us to the point that we are at in the Chamber today, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that you saw it right now with the Official Opposition House Leader, who just rose and spent his entire 20-minute speech, in response to the hon. Finance minister, talking about a closure motion that has not even been moved, not about this legislation that he's indicated that he is here to argue about. You know, I think that's the point. We're at a point now where it's been pretty clear that the opposition is going to continue to delay the progress of the House. There's nothing wrong with the opposition standing and fighting on a bill that they think is important to them. That's their job. I respect that. We're going out of our way to make sure that can happen. We're calling legislation late at night to give them an opportunity to do it. [interjections] They laugh, but they've been given ample opportunities. Again, we're sitting round the clock for the people of Alberta to give the opposition the opportunity to be able to talk about these motions that are important to them.

I just want to talk about my friend the former Government House Leader, now retired, Brian Mason, a good friend to many across the aisle, I am sure, a friend to many of us over here, and think about some of the talks that he would bring when he was bringing in time allocation. He says one quote, and this is what I like: "I've been in opposition, and I know the game. They try to slow things down so that government has to invoke closure and then they point to the government and say: look, the government is being very undemocratic, and they don't want to debate."

That was a pretty good one, Mr. Speaker. I would submit to you and through you to the Chamber that we've seen that the last few days, again, not wanting to debate the bill but wanting to speak about closure so that they can now turn the debate about the hon. Finance minister's bill into a conversation about whether or not we're being democratic and stifling their debate. Brian Mason, December 8, 2015: The people of Alberta expect us to be here and do our job and get the business of the House done. I know the Opposition House Leader was probably in the House when his House leader was saying that the people of Alberta expect us to be here and do our job and get the business of the House done.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta do expect us to be here, and they do expect us to get our job done when we come to this Chamber. The reason I bring that up is the other point the Opposition House Leader raised in his comment was to complain that we are here late at night. Now, we come to this Chamber to do work. This Chamber sits long hours. It's an important part of the process. I do appreciate that the Opposition House Leader lives here in Edmonton, so he may be less dedicated to wanting to stay here at night as some of us who are far away from home right now.

I said last time, when this conversation was taking place in the 24-hour sitting, to the media that I was 300 kilometres away from my family here and all I had was an empty motel waiting for me, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that's why I'm more eager to work late into the night on behalf of my constituents when I'm in Edmonton. I appreciate that, but they . . . I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West is chiming in and heckling. It's been a while since she's heckled me. It's great to see her back in the House, and I look forward to seeing her comments. Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment and Parks referred to a member being absent at a certain point in time and needs to apologize and withdraw.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that's ridiculous. I did not refer to a member being absent from the House. I referred to a member being in the House. This is probably what happens as you get late into debate. I clearly said it was great to see the member back in the House. Mr. Speaker, it's great to see you back in the House. It's great to see the Premier back in the House. It's great to see the Official Opposition House Leader back in the House. It's great to see all the members back inside the House. This is not a point of order.

The Speaker: I would say, while I agree it's not a point of order to refer to people being in the House, the challenge is that we are doing indirectly what we can't do directly. I would caution the hon. member, but this point of order is not well taken.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I assure that it was not my intent. I am happy to see the member back in the House. Congratulations on returning to the House.

Now, we are back to what we were talking about, which is, again, the fact that we're on Bill 9. We are in third reading. The Official Opposition indicates that this is an important piece of legislation to them, that they want to continue to do that, and the government is going to continue to provide them that opportunity. I look forward to hearing the comments from the hon. members in the opposition party as they debate this legislation. I hope, Mr. Speaker, as we go

through third reading of Bill 9, that the opposition will actually begin to start to talk about the bill.

But, I will submit to you, Mr. Speaker, as I get ready to yield the floor, that as long as they continue this behaviour and wanting to talk about closure and not about the legislation, they prove my point, which is, as the former House leader Brian Mason always said, and I'm going to close with this one because I heard him say this many times when he did time allocation. I already said it once, but I just like it: "I've been in opposition, and I know the game. They try to slow things down so that the government has to invoke closure, and then they point to the government and say: look, the government is being very undemocratic, and they don't want to debate." Brian Mason, December 8, 2015, while invoking time allocation on Bill 6, the agriculture safety bill.

Mr. Speaker, you see that already again tonight from the Official Opposition House Leader. I suspect you'll see it again throughout the remainder of the morning because it appears the opposition doesn't want to debate this bill. They just want to debate whether or not the government is being democratic or not. I assure you we'll continue to provide the opposition as much time as possible, but we will not stifle the progress of legislation through this House because on April 16 Albertans voted in record numbers to give us instructions on what to do when we come here. We will do the job that we've been sent here to do despite the opposition trying to block the progress that Albertans have asked for.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen.

Mr. Dang: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise in this House and respond with some brief comments for the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks here. I think it is actually somewhat rich that he would enter this Assembly and speak at length about how their government is doing nothing wrong and that this is business as usual, when we can see very clearly the clock has almost struck 3 a.m. here in the Assembly. This government is clearly trying to ram through this legislation in the cover of darkness.

Really, it's a bill that should have deserved more daylight. It's a bill that workers should have had the opportunity to examine, our constituents should have had the opportunity to examine, and all members of this Assembly should have had more time to examine. But really the hon. Government House Leader there clearly does not agree that Albertans and democracy deserve a chance in this Assembly. He clearly does not agree that democracy includes free and open debate in this Assembly because it appears that they think that 3 a.m. is an appropriate time that we can demonstrate to Albertans what is happening here in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is really rich when the Government House Leader tries to quote previous instances of time allocation being used. This is really unprecedented. We have spent basically three days debating this bill. I admit we have spent quite a bit of time over these three days on this bill, but by and large it has been under the cover of darkness. Nearly every night this week we have been here till 3 or past 3 a.m. The reality of it is that it's because this government is too embarrassed to do this during the daytime. They don't want Albertans to be able to see what is happening. That's why the Government House Leader won't put this up during the days. I believe he is trying to do this to avoid having Albertans see what is going on in this bill, workers see what is going on, and that is something that he should be ashamed of and I think the government should be ashamed of and every single

member of the government bench should be ashamed of, front and back.

I think it's also very clearly something that if they knew that they were going to be breaking the law, which I think they did with this bill, they wouldn't want Albertans to see what was happening, and that's why they would use this veil of darkness. Only by moonlight are we having the opportunity to debate this here, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that is a real shame.

It's a real shame that even with this unprecedented cover of darkness and restriction on the ability for us to debate, members like the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would actually put in bright orange earplugs given to him by the hon. Premier. That is something that is absolutely shocking and unprecedented here in this Assembly, to be so disrespectful to other members who were duly elected here to this Assembly and not just to these members but also to all of the constituents of every single person who represents a seat in this Assembly. It is something that is absolutely an offence to this Assembly, and every single member should take offence. It is something that shows contempt towards the Assembly. It's something that shows that the proceedings of this House are not important enough. It is something that shows that the proceedings of this House should be tuned out, and it shows very clearly that the member cares not for the process of democracy.

That is something that is shameful, and it should be embarrassing, and the member should actually apologize for that not just to this House or to Albertans but really to his own constituents, for not doing his job in this Assembly and listening to Albertans and listening to the voices that Albertans sent here. That is what we were elected to do, Mr. Speaker, to debate in this House. But when the Premier decides to act in basically blatant disregard for the procedures and practices of this House, that is something that all Albertans should be concerned about. That is something I believe all Albertans are concerned about.

We will see, Mr. Speaker, when the sun rises and when Albertans discover that the Premier really has no regard for the rights of workers and has so little regard, in fact, that he doesn't want us to debate it during the daytime, and during the nighttime when it is debated, he would rather put in earplugs than actually listen to the debate in this Assembly. I think that is something that all Albertans will be offended by. I think that is something that all Albertans will understand is not what is expected of government, is not what is expected of their legislators, and is certainly not what they elected MLAs to do here tonight. Mr. Speaker, I am offended, and I think you should be as well. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members.

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

The Speaker: Point of order?

Mr. Dang: I believe the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland was actually just recording me on his cellphone.

The Speaker: A point of order has been called. It appears that the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would like to speak to the point of order.

Point of Order Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber

Mr. Getson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard a lot of noise this evening and all the concerns about hearing loss. Obviously, the hon. members here are well aware of occupational health and safety records because they are completely tied in with the working

communities. Noise-induced hearing loss is no laughing matter, nor is tinnitus. I've been recording the decibel readings of these individuals to my left, which have peaked out at over 97 to 100 decibel readings, and 85 decibel readings equates to what could be sustained as noise-induced hearing loss. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a very loud, boisterous voice. I have tinnitus in my left ear and, as such, had to plug out some of the noise lest all of their arguments fall upon deaf ears in this Chamber entirely. One of the members had checked earlier in the day to verify that I'm actually recording the noise in this Chamber coming from the hon. member to my left.

Mr. Dang: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege.

The Speaker: Keeping in mind that a point of privilege is a serious matter, I'm happy to hear the hon. member's concerns.

Privilege

Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is very clearly established in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* as well as *Beauchesne's* that the practice of recording a member in the Assembly is a breach of the privilege of the Assembly. The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has actually just admitted to this Assembly in his remarks regarding the point of order that he was indeed recording the noise levels in this Assembly, his own words, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I would assure you that I did indeed, and other members here did indeed, hear the words that he said he was recording this Assembly. That is a very serious breach of privilege of the Assembly. I believe that he should immediately delete such a recording, and he should be held in contempt of this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation is rising to speak to the point of privilege.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that I was listening to the exchange just now. While I acknowledge that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland mentioned the word "recording," I think it's fairly obvious to me and everybody else in the House that the word he probably should have used was "measuring," which is not the same thing and is certainly not a breach of privilege. I appreciate that the word he used was "recording." I heard it. I'm sure that *Hansard* will say that, but I think it's pretty obvious to all of us that he used the wrong word, and the right word he probably should have used, which is not a breach of privilege, is he was "measuring." As such, I don't think it meets the standard for the very serious accusation that's being made by the member from the opposite side.

The Speaker: The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, if he wishes to provide some comment.

Mr. Getson: Yes, sir. I used the wrong word. It's a measuring device, an application for reading, not recording of either video or audio. It's simply taking a reading. The hon. member has obviously corrected my error in word usage at this early hour.

The Speaker: Are there others wishing to speak to the point of privilege? Seeing and hearing none, I would agree that this particular situation is not a point of privilege. While it may be unconventional to measure the level of debate inside the Chamber with respect to technologies that are available and/or not, there is

no record of the information that has been shared or said. There is no ability for the member to then share that outside of the Chamber should he ever choose to do so. It's very, very clear that this is not a point of privilege. I consider the matter concluded, and we are continuing.

3:00

Speaker's Ruling

Referring to an Absent Member

The Speaker: The other thing, though, that I will add is that even the chair from time to time can make an error. When he or she does that, we should recognize and acknowledge that. Moments ago the Opposition House Leader raised a point of order with respect to the member, essentially referring to the fact that a member had not been present at some point in time by referring to their presence. In *Beauchesne's* 481(c) it is very clear, so apologies from the chair to the members, that referring to the "presence or absence" of a specific member. As such, very clearly, the member referred to the presence.

I see the hon. Transportation minister rising. He must be rising to withdraw and apologize on behalf of the Government House Leader.

Mr. McIver: It's like you can read my mind, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Government House Leader I would like to rise, apologize for, and withdraw the remarks about the presence of a member in the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: We are on debate of third reading of Bill 9, and I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I will say that I can understand that some hon. members don't want to hear the opposition speak, but I will say that I will exercise my rights and privilege to speak in this place. I will not be measured on what kind of decibels I may or may not use, and I will seek permission from no man to talk in whatever tones that women speak in. I am here to speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I will not be tone-policed while I do it, hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. This bill will define labour relations for at least the next three years.

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

The Speaker: A point of order has been called. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Point of Order

Addressing the Chair

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we just heard an example of the hon. member referring to my colleague from Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland in the second person as opposed to the third person, and I would ask you to insist that the hon. member address her remarks through the Speaker and not directly to another member of the House.

The Speaker: I would agree with the hon. Minister of Transportation that the member should be referring their comments through the chair, and I would encourage her to do so.

Debate Continued

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will rephrase and say that I will not be tone-policed by any member of this House, including the previous member or the Minister of Transportation, for that matter.

Now, this bill will define labour relations, Mr. Speaker, for at least the next three years or at least until the courts do the inevitable, which is strike it down. Let's talk about the mechanisms enabled in the law. It allows the government to delay arbitration in approximately 24 collective agreements covering approximately 180,000 people who work for the broadly conceived public sector. It covers the direct Alberta public service. It covers those who work for Alberta Health Services, many postsecondary institutions, educational institutions, schools, school boards, and others. This bill sets the stage for broad rollbacks of wages in the order of 5 per cent, 10 per cent – who knows? It will reduce pay for nurses, teachers, corrections officers, custodians, educational assistants, social workers, counsellors.

These are human beings, Mr. Speaker. They are Albertans. They built this province with us. They are our neighbours. They are our caregivers. They are the people who protect our air, land, and water. They keep us safe. They guard our prisons and put out our fires. They teach our kids. They are every single one of us, and, yes, they are our brothers and sisters; at least, they're mine. This is the first step away from collective bargaining in good faith, a basic human right affirmed by the courts and a fundamental pillar in the rule of law in a country such as Canada. The government must rethink the use of this legislation. They have so far failed to take our advice and scrap this legislation, this hammer, this affront to democracy and the rule of law, but they could still. They could still hold off on interfering in the normal course of bargaining for the arbitration decisions that are to take place as early as this Saturday.

Let's talk about this assertion, that I and others have made in this House, that it is unconstitutional. This bill, on the face of it, is unconstitutional. Why is it? This is an important point. Let's start with the facts. Of course, it's important to talk about values and fairness, working people trying to pay their bills, but what I want to focus on first are the underlying facts of the assertion.

I still believe in facts, Mr. Speaker. I still believe in reason that guides human progress. I still believe that some things are objectively true. Perhaps in 2019 that's a naive belief on my part as we see an unprecedented, in the postwar period, assault on the institutions that underpin our politics, our economy, and our society, but the foundation of the law around collective bargaining remains. That foundation is good faith. It lies at the heart of private contracts as well. Colloquially, this concept might be just characterized very simply as: you're going to do what you say that you're going to do, and if you didn't actually enumerate it within the contract, then you can trust that the other party will act reasonably, tell the truth, exercise restraint in any power that they may have within the terms of the contract or in negotiating new terms outside of an existing contract.

The collective bargaining right also has a different element to it. It's not just good faith, like it is in private-sector contracts. It's also protected under the Charter in a different way. Under section 2 of the Charter we are guaranteed rights to free association, which is to say that we are able, Mr. Speaker, to choose our friends, faith, bowling league. The state may not, within the obvious reasonable limits in terms of hate speech and other specifically enumerated limits under section 1, choose who my friends are, who I talk to, who I hang out with, who I make agreements with, who I make plans with, who I help, who I donate money to.

Similarly, the state may not interfere in my right to get together with my co-workers to talk to the employer about my wages or my working conditions. This has been upheld by successive Supreme Court decisions. The state may not compromise my individual liberty in this regard, my liberty to freely associate. The state may want to. Government people or others or their associated sock puppets may want to call people names for freely associating in a collective bargaining relationship. They may want to cast aspersions on the democratically elected leadership of whatever group people form to talk to their employer. They have freedom of speech rights to do so. They may say what they want. They have a free speech right, Mr. Speaker – anyone does – to be dismissive, to be arrogant, rude, obstinate, or mean to custodians, to educational assistants, to orderlies, or to anyone else who works hard for an honest day's pay. They have that right. But what they may not do is get in the way of the process of freely associating with one another and then bargaining in good faith.

Now, Conservatives do have the right to say mean things about front-line workers. They do it all the time. They exercise those rights as often, as loudly as they can, and that is fine. That is their right. But despite all that noise, the law of this land is that we must have the ability to get together with our co-workers and hammer out the details of our wages and working conditions.

What's more, section 2(d) of the Charter also guarantees us the right to a process when we get together with our co-workers, and if we are not allowed or able, reasonably able, to withdraw our labour as part of that process, the Supreme Court affirmed in the Sask Fed of Labour decision – I believe it was 2016 – that the right of association is actually relatively meaningless without the process that can ultimately end in the withdrawal of labour. That was the decision rendered by the Supreme Court a couple of years ago.

The courts have found that these rights to free association, to collective bargaining are not just *carte blanche*, but they have to be real. They have to be substantive, and any impediments to them have to be proportionate, have to be last resort, have to be justified. A number of tests have been developed in the jurisprudence on this over the years. In fact, what they can't do is to have an ulterior motive. This is what the courts have found. In fact, when the B.C. Supreme Court struck down a law very similar to this one – there were, in fact, two of them that were struck down by the B.C. Supreme Court – it was appealed and then appealed again at the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court upheld the original decision, which found that the state used its power to provoke labour action, that it passed those laws for reasons other than being proportionate or a justified last resort.

3:10

So what does this mean for the arbitration process? In this case it means that collective agreements have come to their wage reopener phase. The two parties are negotiating, but the negotiations have come to this phase of arbitration. Attempts at mediation have thus far stalled. Parties have a right to a meaningful continuation of that process but not to an outcome. Parties do not have any right to a wage increase. Employers don't have a right to a rollback. The parties must come and negotiate and bring their respective positions. If they cannot come to agreement, then they have a right to go to an arbitrator and make that case, Mr. Speaker.

But in this case we are frustrating that due process right by the long arm of the law and the long arm of government, where this government has not demonstrated the urgency, or they have not demonstrated that they are at the end of some kind of long, protracted exercise. This is, you know, barely a couple of months

in. And the claim that this interference in the normal course of collective bargaining is based on fiscal urgency is rather hollow given the fact that fiscal concerns can be and are always part of the negotiation process and the arbitrator's decisions, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it's shocking to me that that piece isn't fully understood by the Minister of Finance, clearly, or officials within the Premier's office. It portrays to me that either they don't know how to negotiate and how to go in there and make a deal – so much for, you know, some of the members' enthusiastic support of the great deal-maker to the south – don't know how to negotiate, maybe. Maybe they don't understand how to do negotiations. Maybe they don't trust their own negotiators on the government side. It's possible. Maybe they don't trust the officials giving them advice.

Or maybe the goal isn't this at all. Maybe the goal is in fact to create disorder among organized labour in order to find an enemy, build a political case for wage rollbacks, and set up a narrative of the undeserving union member versus the rest of Albertans to divide us from one another; from our neighbours; from the people who protect our air, land, and water; from the educational assistants in my and many of my hon. colleagues' kids' classrooms. Maybe the ultimate aim here, as we frustrate the good-faith process that is based on the rule of law, maybe the ultimate game here is to play politics with teachers, with public safety, with corrections officers, with orderlies, with lab techs. all of those people that we rely on every day to keep us safe, to keep us healthy, to keep us educated, to keep us cared for, Mr. Speaker.

Now, every once in a while – perhaps it's the late hour – the government side betrays a fit of transparency. Instead of saying, "Oh, no, we need time to assess the fiscal situation," which I have already described as extremely thin gruel and not really a reason, Mr. Speaker, every once in a while we get a fit of transparency and, you know, comments that may in fact end up in the courts at some point, which is that folks have said: well, this is about balancing the budget. In other words, what we have from the government side is already an admission that this is about rollbacks. They have already taken a bargaining position in this House, and they are betraying the fact that they are getting in the way of the rule of law in order to push a specific outcome.

This is not about taking several months to understand revenue projections, which should take a few minutes. It's not about that. This is about, certainly, balancing the budget. I can imagine that there are, in fact, challenges with a path to balance when you blow a 4 and a half billion dollar hole on the revenue side in that budget. It becomes awfully tough to balance things. For sure, that balance is going to have to come from the wage bill for nurses, teachers, health care workers, educational assistants, caregivers for seniors, and others, Mr. Speaker. What we have here is a very, very transparent admission, in actual fact, at the late hour during Committee of the Whole, that this isn't at all about waiting to understand the finances better or to get a hold of the projections. No, it's about, quote, unquote, balancing the budget, which, as I said, is a direct interference in the normal course of bargaining and is, due to how labour relations work, in actual fact unlawful.

That brings me to my final point. This bill is not being brought in for the reasons that the government claims. This bill is being brought in for political, not economic reasons. This bill is being brought in to set up a narrative between teachers, nurses, caregivers, and others and other people in Alberta. It is being brought in as a tactic, as a way to cast working people as the enemy of this government and Albertans, and they are not my enemy, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Minister of Transportation has risen.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I tried to listen with care to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. I just wonder how she feels about betraying her own arguments. She said in part of her debate that two months is not a long and protracted period of time, yet she is complaining that four months, which is what the hon. Treasury Board president is asking for in order to gather information, in order to hear from the MacKinnon panel and to come to understand the situation that the government is in after four years of severe mismanagement and poor governance by the previous government – I wonder how she feels about the fact that the opposition side has been complaining for hours and hours and hours and hours and hours. I think, again, we heard earlier that 23 of the 24 members spoke on a previous reading. Despite the protests of not being able to speak, everybody that wanted to speak apparently could speak and did speak.

However, I wonder how the hon. member feels about betraying her own arguments and the opposition's own arguments about what a long delay this is. Really, now we're down to a matter of degree. In terms of whether the delay is right or wrong, which I've heard the opposition say, earlier on this morning we heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview say – and this isn't an exact quote. I'm paraphrasing because I don't have the *Hansard* in front of me. It was something very close to the effect of: well, a one-month delay I could understand. So we've got the Member for Edmonton-Riverview saying that one month is okay. We've got the Member for Lethbridge-West saying that two months is not a long and protracted period of time. Now we're only down to a matter of degree, not the protests of something being wrong here that they've been trying to sell in this House for the last dozens of hours though they would call it shorter than that.

3:20

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that I'm curious about how the member feels about completely destroying the opposition's arguments against this bill, which is an honest and sincere attempt by the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board only to have enough time to put the government in a position to move forward with a reasonable amount of information and a reasonable amount of time to consider the government's position before they move into the arbitration process, not to take the process away from our very valued and important public servants but, rather, to put the government in a position to have an adequate amount of feedback and information before going into that important part of the process.

So, you know, I'm curious about the reflections of the hon. member, if you just think of the arguments that the Member for Lethbridge-West just made, making it clear that she doesn't consider two months to be a long and protracted period of time, combined with the argument from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview that a delay would be okay, that, really, there's only a matter of degree, only a matter of disagreement on the length of the delay. It seems to be completely counter to the arguments that the opposition has tried to offer to this House about bad faith and a bunch of other accusations that are unfounded when their own members in the last couple of hours have actually destroyed all those arguments with their own words.

I'm curious about what the hon. member feels about unravelling the opposition's entire argument during the speech which she just concluded about five minutes ago.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West in the time that's remaining.

Ms Phillips: Well, that's an easy one, Mr. Speaker. This isn't about the specific times. It's about the arbitration on Saturday.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall rising to speak to third reading.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 9. I was listening to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board making the claim that this piece of legislation is simply postponing, that it's a procedural delay, that the preamble needs to be looked at in its totality, all of those arguments that I will deal with. I think that nobody agrees with the government on this, that it's simply postponing, that it's a procedural delay. In the minds of workers, in the minds of 180,000 workers, their representatives, they know very clearly that this law seeks to break their legally binding contracts and the rights therein. There is no doubt in the minds of all those Albertans.

So it's not simply postponing. It's breaking legally binding contracts with the public service that they entered into in good faith, that they entered into, I guess, believing that the government will follow their contract. These are Albertans who provide high-quality service each and every day in our communities, in all our ridings. These are teachers, nurses, workers that provide the services that we need and rely on pretty much on a daily basis, that our constituents need and rely on pretty much a daily basis.

Then the Minister of Finance also argued that it's not fair that one side doesn't have the information they need. The only time they don't have information is when it comes to workers and their rights. Well, when they brought forward a tax cut, a 4-some billion dollar tax break, for the wealthy multinationals, they didn't blink for a second. They had every information to do that, and they just went ahead with that decision. Even though we know that they were claiming that their decision will create jobs, will create prosperity, all those things, we are still seeing layoffs in our economy, in Calgary.

Same thing, that it will be disrespectful to make a decision without full information: that was another argument. That's the reason, they said, that they're bringing forward this legislation. I think they made every other decision without full information or without whatever information they had, and only for Alberta workers they don't have needed information and they need to find and dig into that information. I think the Alberta public service in Finance and Treasury – my colleague from Calgary-*Buffalo* will attest to that – are very capable people. They're very capable of providing that information and on very short notice. Had, I guess, government sought that information, they would have provided that information. It's, I guess, not really an argument that they don't have the information to make that decision.

I think they would exactly know that cutting taxes, giving a tax break would create a hole in the budget and would make the deficit bigger and will require cutting services, will require breaking these contracts, legally binding contracts. I think contracts are fundamental to our relationship to our everyday dealings. I think that earlier, when I was speaking to it, I mentioned that we enter into many different contracts each and every day, from acquiring cellphone service to leasing to buying a house, and every time when we enter into a contract, I think that's the understanding, that this document will govern the relationship of both parties.

Parties enter into these relationships in good faith that both sides will honour their obligations. If we lease a car, there is a certain payment that the person who is leasing will make, and the

dealership will get that money, but there will be new regulations that will govern their relationship, how maintenance will be dealt with. But here government is using law to change that relationship unilaterally, and that is unfair, that is undemocratic, and that is not lawful. That is not the best use of their mandate and their power.

Earlier in the Legislature I think that, if I recall correctly, I heard the Premier refer to article 26 of the universal declaration of human rights. That article is with respect to education, and the specific provision that was shared was that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." So if that universal declaration of rights is here to guide them with the decision-making, I think there is another article in the same declaration – that is article 23 – which says that everyone has a right to form a trade union, and they have a right to do so to protect their interests. Certainly, protecting their interests will cover their collective bargaining rights. That's the reason that they're given that right. So if a universal right is a guide to them when it comes to education, it should guide them also when it comes to Albertans' right to associate, Albertans' right to join trade unions, and Albertans' right to collective bargaining. The same kinds of rights are also enshrined in the International Labour Organization charter as well, which gives not only the freedom to associate but also the freedom to bargain collectively.

3:30

Now, I think it's settled in our jurisprudence coming from the Supreme Court of Canada that our Charter protects these collective bargaining rights, not just that they have a right to unionize. It also puts corresponding duties on the parties to do so in good faith, a duty on the parties to meet in good faith, to set a time frame for the process, to agree on time frames, and to engage in meaningful dialogue.

But here we are seeing a heavy-handed tool, a heavy-handed piece of legislation, a heavy-handed legislative hammer to break these contracts, to wage a war on these public-sector workers who are in wage talks, which certainly clearly shows that the government is not approaching all this in good faith. The government is breaching their constitutionally protected rights and breaching those rights by dint of law, which we know can be challenged. I think that in our daily lives, when somebody breaches the contract, what do we do? We take them to the courts. So this might create jobs for some lawyers, but I think that overall it's not a fair thing to do. It's not a piece of legislation that we should be debating at this hour.

I think it's important for us to debate this because this is impacting almost 200,000 Albertans. Their rights are at stake. We hear a lot from the other side, that they have a mandate. Sure, they have a mandate, but I don't think these 180,000 Albertans gave the UCP, this government, a mandate to walk roughshod on their constitutionally protected rights, on the rights the Charter grants them, on the rights that are talked about in the universal declaration of human rights, that's advocated by labour organizations. I don't think that Albertans gave this government a mandate to do so. There's still time. They should reconsider and think about it.

When they talk about their mandate and wanting their mandate to be respected, I think they should also respect the mandates that unions come with. Unions are made in a democratic process. It's always the majority of the bargaining unit members that come together to create those unions, and when they enter into these negotiations, enter into these agreements, these agreements are democratically ratified by the union membership. They have a mandate there, too. So if they want their mandate to be respected, I think they should respect the union's mandate, too.

We hear a lot about the mandate, but I think a couple of weeks ago I saw their mandate challenged by kids, youth, in Calgary, and none of them – it was there, but I saw their mandate getting challenged on Bill 8 today, this evening around 6, 6:30. So I think they should reconsider what mandate Albertans have given them and how much mandate they should use. Certainly, what they are doing through this piece of legislation is not something Albertans mandated them to do.

They talk about the budget deficits, and they talk about respect for Albertans' dollars. Sure, Albertans are concerned about budget deficits, and they want their tax dollars to be used prudently, but I don't think that they want this government to do so at the cost of their basic, Charter-protected, legally binding contractual rights. Albertans don't expect them to walk roughshod on their rights.

Similarly, they talk about deficits. I think that when we talk about deficits, deficits are not just on the books. We inherited a lot of deficits in 2015 in our communities. We inherited a deficit in our school system. That was the reason that we invested in 244 schools across this province. That was also a deficit that was not reflected on the books but that was present in our communities. If we look at our seniors' housing, we inherited a huge deficit. There is still, I guess, a list of over some thousand people who are waiting on waiting lists. That's why we invested almost \$1.2 billion in seniors' housing. It's all depends on how you define deficit. There was a deficit left by the previous government, and that's why we invested in communities.

Albertans not only don't want deficits, but they also want to have cutting-edge education for their children, they want to have hospitals, and they want to have seniors' care centres. That was the reason that we were investing in all those things. Somehow their priorities didn't change overnight. Yes, they elected a different government, but their needs still remain the same. There are almost 15,000 kids who are going to our school system come September. They will still need schools, they will still need teachers, and they will still need teaching assistants.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to provide a brief question or comment.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise under 29(2)(a). I'm very interested, as always, in listening to the Member for Calgary-McCall speak. I know that members in this House realize that he's a lawyer and one of the finest minds in this Legislature. I know that the Member for Calgary-McCall understands that we do criticize countries who do not follow the rule of law, who do not respect the international declaration of human rights, that was actually created by a Canadian in conjunction with the widow of the 32nd President of the United States. Eleanor Roosevelt and John Humphrey created that together in 1946-1947.

I'm just wondering if the member, who has of course travelled the world and is a lawyer, can talk about what we lose, on top of the respect of the world community, when we fail to respect the rule of law ourselves. What other losses do we suffer when the standards of jurisprudence that I referenced when I talked about the Supreme Court of Canada decision saying that the law of the land is to confirm that honesty is absolutely necessary – and the court said that Canadian contract law comes with a duty of good faith that requires parties to perform their contractual obligations honestly. Now, indeed, we're not doing that with this Bill 9, this piece of legislation. I wondered, from a legal standpoint, how embarrassed we could become as a country if indeed this type of pattern of legislation continues.

3:40

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member, for the detailed question. I think I will keep my comments to collective bargaining and the rule of law in that context. I think that collective bargaining has many benefits for employers, employees, and society at large as well. The fundamental thing or aspect of this is that it promotes negotiation, it promotes collaboration, and it encourages or brings parties together at a bargaining table. People think through their issues, people think through their interests, and they come together with agreements. Then they act upon those agreements, which leads to a peaceful society where the people understand their rights and they expect their rights to be respected.

If we breach contracts like this, we will certainly see labour unrest. The workers who will be impacted by this legislation: I don't think they will be very happy with this piece of legislation. That will also impact their workplace productivity. It also may impact their turnover. It will also impact retention rates and all those things.

I guess the rule of law in this context, that their contracts should be honoured, is important for many different reasons. For the most part, I think it's important for the fair and equitable functioning of a society where contracts are only entered into based on this understanding that parties will respect the rights and relationships agreed to in those documents. These contracts, especially collective bargaining contracts, I think, are important ones in that they are also protected under our Constitution, under our Charter, the Charter that gives Albertans, gives Canadians a right to make those associations, join trade unions, and also protects their right to collective bargaining. That's a right that shouldn't be interfered with lightly, that shouldn't be interfered with in the way this government has interfered with it.

If they were worried about their finances, all those things, I think they could have put the brakes on some of the other pieces of legislation, some of the other things they did; for instance, that giveaway of 4-some billion dollars in tax breaks. They could have waited on that promise until they figured out this, because that one was more important.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join the debate this evening for third reading of Bill 9? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. I apologize. I'm frozen. I cannot get warm, but I'm sure I will. We were standing outside, joining hundreds of young folks in support of LGBTQ youth, and I haven't quite gotten warm yet.

Yesterday, or at least I think it was yesterday – I'm not really sure what day it was – I spoke about the perspectives of a number of people on Bill 9. I wanted to share a number of stories, and I wanted to share a number of quotes. I'm going to do a little bit more of that today. I mean, yesterday I shared the wise words of our leader, of my colleagues from Edmonton-North West, Edmonton-Mill Woods. I talked about the positive approach she had taken to labour and the relationships that she'd built in that capacity and just how proud I was to see her leadership in her tenure as labour minister. I spoke a little bit about what the Member for Lethbridge-West had – she'd given a very good summary of Charter rights and so forth.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I wanted to focus as well on the thoughts of a number of labour leaders because we've seen in the last couple of days labour leaders really speaking out on behalf of their members: Guy Smith from the

Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, Gil McGowan from the Alberta Federation of Labour, and Heather Smith from the United Nurses of Alberta. I talked about their concerns with this unconstitutional approach, this absolute breach of rights, this all-out attack on workers.

I did speak in particular about the nurses. You know, Heather Smith is someone I respect a great deal. She noted that she'd never seen any interference to this degree even in the Klein era of the 1990s. She noted that even in the dark days of the 1990s the Alberta government never reached into collective agreements and violated the constitutional rights of public-sector workers.

I trust her, as I said. I trust her to stand up for workers, to stand up for rights. In fact, I saw her this evening – tonight – with us in solidarity with LGBTQ youth. She stood in the rain, in the cold, with our caucus and with hundreds of other Albertans. When she points out this betrayal, this breach of Charter rights of nurses, I trust her. I'm going to listen to her.

I didn't get a chance, however, to speak to the profession that is close to me, and that is teaching. I ran out of time, in fact, which is rare, because I would never think I would have run out of time when I got into this job. I'm not usually a person of a lot of words, but I'm having to become a person of more words. Many of you know I was a teacher and a proud member of the Alberta Teachers' Association, teaching in rural Alberta. Many of you have heard that I started my teaching career in Bawlf, Alberta, which is a tiny community near Camrose. I was also in Forestburg, Alberta.

Now, what I wanted to talk a little bit about was the Alberta Teachers' Association's perspective on Bill 9. Greg Jeffery is the past president and, again, someone who I respect greatly on this. I'd like to share his perspective. We know that the ATA is the professional association of teachers, and they act as the bargaining agent for 46,000 teachers who are employed across this province. Now, Greg Jeffery calls Bill 9 "a heavy-handed abuse of power that significantly erodes trust between this government and its public servants."

You may not know that in April 2019 a two-year agreement was reached between the ATA and the TEBA, which is the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association, after a government-appointed mediator recommended that independent arbitration be used to determine any salary increases. That agreement was thereafter ratified by a vote of teachers, school boards, and government representatives. It was agreed upon by all those parties. It was, as we call it, an agreement of good faith. As Greg Jeffery points out, you know: we had a collaborative relationship; we arrived at that agreement in good faith. And now what is this government doing? It's using its highest powers. It's using its hammer, as my colleague from Calgary-McCall talked about earlier, "to unilaterally change the terms of the agreement." He points out: imagine if this were to happen in the business world, if this were to happen in the private sector. If a contract was so blatantly ignored, you wouldn't do business with that corporation.

He points out that it's a huge interference, just as Heather Smith did. It's a huge interference. It's a huge reach into the collective bargaining process. He says: you know what? There's really no need to delay arbitration. We know that the blue-ribbon panel is scheduled to report back by August 15. Arbitration hearings with teachers aren't expected to begin until September.

It's offensive to teachers. Of course, just like other labour leaders, he's calling on this government to abandon its plans to pass this bill that we're debating currently and to respect public-sector workers, including teachers.

As many of you know, teachers agreed to this after already agreeing to take six years of zeros, of zero increases, in the past seven years. So it's not about teachers not being paid enough or

complaining about their wages. It's about teachers, again, having agreed in good faith to a contract, already agreeing to no increases and then being, basically, lied to.

3:50

The other interesting thing that he talks about and that the nurses' union talked about as well is concerns about morale. You know, right now it's June 20, and we've got teachers who are teaching the younger grades dealing with very excited students who are about to break for the summer and those teaching the higher grades dealing with diploma examinations and year-end examinations, and there is a lot of pressure and a lot of stress. Added to that is the pressure, the stress, of not knowing what's going to be happening with their collective agreement.

I'm also concerned about attraction and retention of public-sector workers and what such an approach by this government could mean, particularly in rural Alberta, where, you know, I spent my teaching career and where I grew up as well. We know that there are still rural areas in Alberta where they have a hard time attracting nurses. In fact, David Harrigan, who is also from the United Nurses of Alberta, noted that some of them are starting to use agency nurses. They're just not able to staff their hospitals and their health care facilities. As I said, having taught out there and seeing how it is hard to attract and retain folks in various parts of the public sector, I think about the students that I would have taught out in these small communities and what careers they'd be seeking. Would they want to seek a career in nursing or teaching knowing that there's this time of much unrest?

Greg Jeffery from the ATA points out, though, that this isn't going to change the delivery of public education, because he knows, like we know or most members of this House know, teachers are professionals. And despite the fact that there is uncertainty, despite the fact that they feel as if their rights are being breached, they will continue to do their incredible work and deliver the high-quality education that they have for years in this province. But the timing, of course, is tragic, as I've noted. I mean, these are teachers who've worked hard. They've put in a lot of hours, and they're heading into a summer of uncertainty, for sure. I've heard from many of them.

In fact, I'll make reference to the rally tonight out on the steps of the Legislature, again, hundreds of folks out there in the cold and the rain. A number of teachers came up to me, and of course they were supporting us for our work to support LGBTQ youth and the fight that we continue to have in us to ensure that those youth are protected. I actually had a few of them say to me, too, that they're concerned about these other bills, including Bill 9, and what that's going to mean.

You know, I chatted about nurses and teachers and some of their concerns. I actually had somebody reach out to me on Facebook, and she wanted her story shared. She is a worker in Calgary, and she'd reached out to me when she saw we were in the Chamber a little bit earlier than this time last night. She was one of those keen folks watching online at about 2 a.m., and she says the following:

As a pharmacy technician working to my full scope of practice I represent a significant cost savings as I perform tasks that only 3 years ago were performed by members with higher education qualifications. My role has had 20% staff turnover in the past year and a wage cut would make it impossible to ever be fully staffed. I work at a cancer centre where we are working beyond capacity to make hundreds of life saving individually dosed IV bags and thousands of oral medication doses every day and this government is telling me that my rights don't matter and I'm not worth negotiating with. Thank you for standing up for me. Thank you for showing me what a courageous caring MLA looks like.

Her story is, I'm sure, the story of hundreds, thousands of workers across this province who are just trying to do the best for Albertans

and feeling completely neglected, rejected by this government: something to think about.

As I was doing some research in preparation to talk about Bill 9, I wanted to share the perspective of someone else that I respect. His name is David Climenhaga. He's a writer, and he's got an interesting take on Bill 9. People might say: well, why is this a big deal? Right? We heard from members opposite tonight, from the Finance minister. We listened carefully to the words he chose as he was introducing third reading. You know, he used words like "just" and "nearly" and "just a temporary postponement."

David Climenhaga says, "Yeah, probably a lot of Albertans hear that and think: okay; it's not a big deal." Well, it is a big deal, and here's why. We all know that, once passed, this bill will postpone the start of any arbitration hearings until after Halloween, kind of a scary timing, and as we've outlined, 24 collective agreements are impacted, and so are about 180,000 employees across this province. So despite the fact that the members opposite will say that it's just a short procedural delay while this aforementioned blue-ribbon panel gets its handle on the province's finances, we should be worried. David Climenhaga notes that

this is because it is neither hyperbolic nor tendentious to declare that the government's motives in introducing a law that breaks important terms and conditions of legal contracts should be transparent to even a casual observer.

As one of my colleagues pointed out earlier, of course this government won't say this – this is not the narrative that they're sharing – but halting arbitration hearings is obviously intended to prevent one thing and one thing alone. And what is that? Arbitrators giving public employees like nurses, like teachers a raise.

The urgency for a government that has already decided to attack public sector salaries is that many Alberta public employees' unions negotiated "wage-reopener" agreements in their current contracts, which have now reached the point [where] these wages-only negotiations are about to start or are already underway.

As we know, if the parties to a wage reopener can't reach an agreement, compulsory binding arbitration is triggered, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview talked about earlier. The problem, of course, for a government like this one is that arbitrators have to make their decisions based on facts like comparable salaries paid to other workers, the cost of living, and the employer's finances, not based on ideology or based on hostility to the public sector or to unions.

So by tearing up this inconvenient part of the agreements signed just over two years ago by several unions, the government gives itself time to plot its . . . moves.

Of course, it gives the government an opportunity to breach a key part of collective agreements like those that I talked about earlier, that of the AUPE, the United Nurses of Alberta, the Health Sciences Association, of which that person I spoke of earlier is a member, and the Alberta Teachers' Association. Again, just like the teachers, these members sat down and agreed to multiple years of frozen wages in return for the ability to negotiate a wage increase in the final year of the contract. This bill, Bill 9, strips the contracts.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am always pleased to hear from my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think she had a little bit more of a story to tell here and a little bit more that this Assembly would be privileged to hear, so I'd

encourage her to please get up and let us know what else she has to tell the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Yes. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-South. In fact, I'll just continue by noting that I'm quoting a lot of this from Mr. Climenhaga because I really appreciate his perspective on this.

I was just starting to say that Bill 9, this proposed legislation, strips the contracts of the provision on which members' agreement to a wage freeze was based, again a clear direction. He actually gives a similar example to Greg Jeffery from the Alberta Teachers' Association. Imagine – and I think the members opposite should consider this – just the outcry, the brouhaha that would result in the private sector and among Conservatives "if an NDP government, say, had told a contractor that a provision in its contract that allowed periodic renegotiation of its fees had been nullified by legislation!" Well, of course, we can imagine that people would be up in arms. As many of us have mentioned, this is a clear violation of rights that are enshrined in our Constitution.

4:00

As he points out, this is what public-sector unions are talking about when they say that their members' constitutional rights are being violated. Of course, it will inevitably be tested in our courts. As we know, this is all happening at the same time that this panel is doing its work. From history, from the backgrounds of some of those panel members, and from what we can speculate, the panel will likely come up with some nonshocking findings like recommendations for wage rollbacks, wage freezes, again, all fitting nicely into this government's narrative. As he also points out, we know that this panel is predestined for some unfair conclusions because they're not even looking at the revenue side, right? They're not even looking at the revenue side, nor are they able to perhaps re-examine the \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut. Again, I mean, that could be another way to look at the province's finances, but that's not in their mandate.

Just to end, I think I want to reiterate the concern for future labour relations and for the stability of this province. We're not talking about a small number of folks who are employed in these public-sector unions across this province. We're talking about a lot of folks. I shared the other day just how much Albertans stood up in opposition to previous Conservative governments' approaches to negotiating or, I guess, not negotiating. In the case of, say, bills 45 and 46 I stood with a lot of folks on a very cold day, in particular on Bill 45, years ago, and Albertans weren't standing for that, and I don't think that they're going to stand for this.

Again, it's not just about those workers. It's about the impact on their families. It's about communities in some cases. As many of you know, the riding that I represent, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, would be, you know, an area that a lot of folks would maybe label as working class. We've got a lot of folks who do struggle to get by and who have contributed significantly to the labour movement in this province. They're concerned, and rightly so. There is this brewing loss of trust in this government, that hasn't been in power all that long, and as I said, it bodes quite poorly for future labour relations as well.

So it's a bit of, I guess, a warning to the members opposite to consider the impacts because I think that probably every member opposite has someone in their family or their extended family who is employed in one of these unions and who will be affected, who are right now feeling like their rights are not being respected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 9?

An Hon. Member: Question.

The Speaker: I think the Speaker calls the question.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise and speak in the limited time that we have here in the Assembly to the bills that are brought before us, especially here today for Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I mean, it's something that is really important for many, many Albertans. It's really important because what the Premier and the Conservative government here are doing is that they are moving forward to break the law. They are moving forward to abuse their power and attack front-line workers and unions. I think that is something that every single member of this Assembly should be concerned about. I think it's something that every single member of the opposition is concerned about. I think it's something that a lot of members of the unions and organized labour across this province are very concerned about.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I just had a message forwarded to me by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, and I understand that it's from a teacher who resides in her riding. I think it's something that has a very strong message, that I want every single member of this Assembly to hear. It reads: dear member, Bill 9 is an abuse of power that erodes any trust that existed between the government and teachers; an agreement was reached in good faith back in April 2019, and unilaterally delaying arbitration is heavy handed; I'm writing to ask that you please defend the mediation process and ask the government to allow the independent arbitration, which was agreed upon by teachers, school boards, and government representatives, to continue; the use of Bill 9 to break a contract in order to cause a delay that isn't necessary is reckless and sets a precedent that can only lead to future mistrust in negotiations. This is from a teacher from the member's riding.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that is not an unusual thing to hear. In fact, I was in my riding just a few days ago, and I was going to visit some schools as graduations are proceeding around this time of year, as I'm sure all members are aware. One of the things that I do for my constituents is that I give scrolls to the students who graduate from grades 6, 9, and 12 and so forth. One of the things I did is that I stopped in to visit the principal of one of my local schools in my constituency. Indeed, she came up to me and thanked me for dropping the scrolls off, and the first thing she actually asked me was: "What do you think is going to happen with this arbitration bill? It's going to be so bad for us teachers."

That's the sentiment I'm hearing all across my riding, Mr. Speaker. That's what people are asking me unsolicited. When I told her that our opposition was fighting it every day and that we believed that it wouldn't hold up in court and it was absolutely unconstitutional, she said: well, that's good to hear, and I'm glad you guys got in at least as the opposition because these guys are going to tear us apart. That's how teachers feel about this government, that they're going to tear them apart, and I think that's something that's very concerning because teachers are the core of our education system and the core of shaping our future to make sure we have a strong education. When you negotiate with them in bad faith, it's something that's very grossly offensive, and I think that's something that we should be concerned about. Indeed, the teachers and nurses that are under attack by this bill are people that live in our communities and that we represent. They're the people that really hold our communities together.

I explained to that principal that we had actually been in until about 3:30 the night before, I believe. We had been in, and I had been debating on her behalf, really, until 3:30, trying to make sure that we had the opportunity to discuss the important issues of why the government shouldn't negotiate in bad faith. The government shouldn't break the law. They shouldn't violate the constitutional rights of teachers and nurses and union members.

Really, Albertans understand what that means. They understand that the government is indeed – right now, actually, they're laughing at the concept of being allowed to break the law. They're laughing that they're able to go out and use their bully tactics against front-line workers. I think that's something that's very unfortunate because what it's going to do is that it's going to lead to labour unrest. It's going to lead to compromised services. As this government goes to court, Mr. Speaker, it's going to lead to very costly settlements because this government is going to lose. As we've seen in other jurisdictions, when this has been brought to court, these rights are constitutionally protected.

We know that the people that are being attacked by this bad-faith bargaining bill are Albertans who work hard each and every day to provide high-quality services to Albertans, and they deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Unfortunately, it seems that the members of the government don't understand that or they don't care. They don't care that our front-line workers work very hard for this government day in and day out, and indeed many of those people that this government will be attacking are actually working right now across this province in emergency rooms and hospitals and health centres. Wherever they may be, there are people working right now under agreements with this government that are being attacked by this bill.

I mean, if the Minister of Finance doesn't think that their voices are important or that their rights to collectively bargain are important, then I'm really disappointed in that, Mr. Speaker. It's something that I actually think is a sign of poor governance. That's the government's prerogative. If they wish to govern in a poor manner, that is their right, but it's something that's disappointing. I don't think we should be legislating away a chance to discuss fair wages.

I don't think we should be using legislative tools as political props here. This is really being done to delay arbitration past the next federal election here. I know the Premier is very fond of Ottawa, and I know the Premier intends to try and spend a lot of time in Ottawa, as he already has and will in the future, coming up to this federal election. I mean, I prefer, of course, to stay here in Alberta in my constituency and fight for those workers and those workers' rights. The Premier certainly has the right to go and campaign on behalf of other parties in other jurisdictions that may or may not have the best interests of Albertans at heart. That's the Premier's prerogative.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it really does speak to how little the government understands what this bill is going to do and how little the government understands what bad-faith bargaining actually means because they came in here and they told Albertans and they told this House that debate was not important. Indeed, after only one speaker had spoken at second reading, they moved the previous question. Then the next day they had notice on the Order Paper for time allocation. That notice remains right now. It still remains on the Order Paper as we speak. That is something that's a shame because this is a bill that deserves the time of day to be debated in this Assembly. It deserves that every single member who was sent here by their constituents for their constituents is able to speak here. I think it deserves to have more time than at 4:10 a.m. and 4:11 a.m. because Albertans deserve to see this.

4:10

I know, of course, that Assembly TV is broadcasting live right now. I believe it's on Shaw and Telus. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I think most Albertans, the ones that are currently working shift work – perhaps they're nurses that have to work overnight – are not going to be able to watch this because they're going to be working while their government takes away their rights, and the Albertans that are not working shift work right now will be working tomorrow. Teachers, for example, Mr. Speaker, are going to be asleep because they know they have to work hard tomorrow to have a strong Alberta and a strong future for our students. Unfortunately, they're going to wake up and find out that their government has also stripped away their rights.

I think that's something that's a real shame here. It's a shame that the correctional officers that are currently helping inmates reform and keeping us safe here, Mr. Speaker, when they get off their shift or, indeed, go on their shift or wake up to go on their shift: they're going to see that this government directly attacked them and directly took away their bargaining rights. That's what they're going to be reading about in the news tomorrow. That's what they're going to be seeing on the television and hearing on the radio as they drive to their workstations. That's something that I think is really unfortunate because this bill impacts over 180,000 workers, right? That's a significant amount. That's 180,000 workers not just here in Edmonton. The government, I know, has a great disdain for Edmonton, and they wish that Edmonton, perhaps, wasn't a part of this province at some point. I don't want to presume anything, but that's what I've heard. If that is what the government wishes, I mean, they will find out and they will realize soon enough that indeed a lot of these 180,000 workers live in their ridings as well. They don't only live here in Edmonton.

We have members in the opposition here from four different cities in this province. Indeed, in every single one of those cities there are people that work in the public service and whose rights are going to be taken away this morning by this government in bad faith, and really it's their rights that are protected by the Constitution.

When we look at what this bill does – here we are in third reading now. We've had a lot of opportunity and we tried to propose amendments that would make a bad bill better. Mr. Speaker, I think you've used that term yourself many times in the past when you were on this side of the House. We wish to sometimes help make a bad bill better. The government refused. The government refused because they knew that they were trying to take away these rights for workers and that if we did make it better, it would allow workers to be able to negotiate in better faith, not good faith – of course, this is the bad-faith bargaining bill – but in better faith.

The government either have to understand that or they have to not care. Really, they either don't care about the workers that are under their charge, the ones who are out there like, for the Minister of Environment and Parks, for example, the fish and wildlife officers who are out there right now keeping us safe and making sure our environment is protected – those workers, when they get off shift or perhaps right now are listening to their radios or are tuned in to Assembly TV and watching us, their rights are being stripped away by the minister right now.

I mean, of course, we can also see that many ministers such as the Minister of Education will have many teachers that will wake up in the morning and realize that ultimately their boss, Mr. Speaker, has voted against their own rights. Maybe that speaks to something about employers, but definitely I think it's something that in this Assembly we should strive to do better. We should strive

to have a stronger debate in this Assembly, and we should strive to protect our employees and the people who work on behalf of all Albertans and the unions that represent those workers.

We shouldn't work in bad faith. I mean, we heard at quite a bit at length from my colleagues here in the opposition stories of how teachers and nurses and lab techs and educational assistants and social workers and so forth will be negatively affected by this bill. If the government didn't have their earplugs in, maybe they would have understood. If the government and the Premier had decided to not put in their earplugs and had decided to not attack the very foundations of democracy in this Chamber, maybe they would understand where we're going. Instead, we see the hon. Premier laughing away in his corner over there as he strips away the rights of Albertans, and I think that's something that's a real shame.

I would say, as I have said before in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier should be ashamed of this bill, but indeed I know that the Premier certainly is not ashamed, and I think that in itself is something that I'm a little bit upset about because it shows poor judgment on behalf of this government. It shows such poor judgment on behalf of the government to directly attack workers and show no remorse. That's something that I think is shocking to me but perhaps is not shocking to many Albertans.

Actually, I did mention that it was shocking to me on social media at quite some length this evening and earlier in the morning here, and many Albertans wrote back saying that they were not surprised. So perhaps Albertans are now seeing what this government is doing. They are seeing the direct attack on workers that is going on here. They're seeing the direct attack on the rights of Albertans here and on unions, and I think that's something that's a real shame.

I mean, it's a real shame that the members like the Member for Calgary-Klein will heckle away and disregard the rights of those workers. He can go on at length about how he hasn't heard from any Albertans, but I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I have. I can assure you that those workers can hear that he doesn't care about their rights. I think that's actually something that Albertans will be very disappointed in that member for and will be disappointed in this entire government for.

And that's simply the truth, Mr. Speaker. The truth and the facts are that this is a gross abuse of power. It's an illegal act. It's a bill that breaks the constitutional rights of unions and workers in this province. It directly attacks all workers because an attack on one is an attack on all. It's something that really does not do any of the things that the Finance minister purports it will do.

He purports it's just for delaying the arbitration, but indeed he knows very well – or I would think that he knows very well; I wouldn't presume – that this would indeed actually impact the ability to negotiate in good faith, and that is something that has not just been established by members speaking in this Assembly, but it's something that has been established by the highest court of this land. It's been established by the Supreme Court of Canada here, Mr. Speaker. That is something that if the Finance minister is not aware of, that I'm trying to explain to him right now, and if he'd take the earplugs out and look away from his phone, perhaps he would understand.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that the government just does not care about workers and does not care about the people that are under their charge and the services that those employees provide to Albertans, and that's a real shame. That's something that is really upsetting to me because I understand, as my constituents understand and I'm sure many constituents of the members opposite understand, that these services are essential for Alberta, having strong organized labour that can negotiate in good faith to provide

the services like correctional officers, like sheriffs, like our peace officers across this province and fish and wildlife officers.

It is essential that we have strong laws in this province and that we uphold the rule of law in this province. Conservatives sure like to say it, Mr. Speaker, but here we can see tonight that they either don't understand what the rule of law is or they really don't care and that they would rather use it as a political talking point. That's really a shame.

I'd encourage all members to vote against this, but it looks like the government just won't care enough to do so.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. All members will know that I like to go back and forth between the opposition and the government when there is a choice. The opposition has had many opportunities to speak under (29)(2)(a), but I do see that the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has risen to speak under 29(2)(a) as well.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that it's been an incredible evening of debate and discussion, and it's exciting. Actually, I think it's been one of the more exciting nights that I've been here so far in session, to hear the back and forth between both sides of this House and the robust discussion that we've been able to have.

I wanted to make a quick comment, especially about our Member for Edmonton-South and his comments earlier about the importance of seeing members from both sides of the House stand up and debate and discuss, you know, on behalf of their constituents and speak up on behalf of their constituents. I thought it was important to be able to stand up and commend him and commend the members opposite for doing that as well as the members on our side of the floor, too.

4:20

I wanted to comment a little bit on something I heard earlier, the Member for Edmonton-South speaking up on behalf of the constituents of Drumheller-Stettler, the 23 per cent of the folks that didn't vote for our Member for Drumheller-Stettler. I thought it would be important to get up and speak on behalf of the 54 per cent of the voters that didn't vote for the Member for Edmonton-South.

You know, we heard a lot earlier today, actually, from the Member for Edmonton-West Henday about not representing or not getting back to constituents. I can tell you that that's very important to me, and probably few people in this House have knocked on as many doors as I have in making sure that I'm getting out there and hearing from the good people in Calgary-Klein, and that includes doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, lab workers. I can tell you that I just spent a full weekend in my riding connecting with people who have those professions.

We heard a little bit from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre about a disdain from our party, our government towards these government workers. I can tell you that I have not heard anything negative from the members of this government or the ministers of this government towards our public service. In fact, I've heard nothing but positive things, respect for our public service and how hard they work for us, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that this government stands with our public service and is committed to working with them.

Going back to this idea of the 54 per cent of the people that did not vote for the Member for Edmonton-South, they did not vote for the Member for Edmonton-South because of their economic record, because of their attack on jobs here in Alberta, because they saw how their policies significantly impacted the success of Alberta moving forward. I can tell you from door-knocking in my riding

that I had lots of nurses, lots of teachers, lots of social workers that voted for our party and, in fact, came out and door-knocked with me. They did that, again, because they recognized that we needed to get this fiscal house in order to have a sustainable path forward so that we did not continue to leverage our children's future, so that we had money and resources to be able to continue to provide excellence in government services going forward.

That's what I heard at the doors. That's what I continue to hear, and I can tell you that when I was back at my constituency, going from event to event to event and talking to hundreds of people this past weekend . . .

An Hon. Member: Through the chair.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: I'm of course talking through the chair.

. . . that included so many – so many – doctors, nurses, and social workers who were patting me on the back and thanking me for the hard work that we are doing up here to get our economy back on track and showing fiscal prudence, taking the time and the restraint to make sure that we have the right information so that we can move forward and make good fiscal decisions so that we have a sustainable path forward. I heard that from the doctors and nurses and teachers in my riding, and I'm sure I would hear that from the 54 per cent of the people that did not vote for the Member for Edmonton-South in his riding.

I'm happy to stand up on their behalf and to speak up for fiscal prudence and make sure that we show responsibility as a government going forward, that we're not making rash decisions, that we're being responsible with hard-earned tax dollars, that we're not wasting money and taking into full consideration – like I said the other day, when we take a look at who this money belongs to, it's not us. It belongs to taxpayers – it belongs to the people who have worked hard – and we need to demonstrate fiscal prudence for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West rising.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise and adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Time Allocation on Bill 9

24. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than two hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, this government will not be held hostage by the Official Opposition. When necessary, we will use the tools at our disposal in order to move forward with our legislative agenda.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of conversation this week about time allocation, and I think it's an important discussion. Whenever a government uses time allocation, they should be justified in it. I think it should be used sparingly. I think it's very important that the

Official Opposition has an opportunity to do their work on behalf of the people of this province. They have an important duty, which this side of the House certainly respects.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we have been through a process since, basically, Monday at 7:30 until now, Thursday morning at 4:30, working our way through this piece of legislation, which is a three-and-a-half-page bill. It's becoming quite clear that it is the opposition's intent to paralyze the Legislature and to stop the legislative agenda of this place moving forward, to block the majority who have a responsibility to move forward with the legislative agenda. We're not going to tolerate that, and we will use the tools that are available to us on behalf of Albertans when we need to.

With that said, we still want to provide the opposition with a little more time; hence, why we have two hours with this time allocation motion. I do know that when the hon. Opposition House Leader rises momentarily, he will have lots of quotes, likely from me. I look forward to hearing myself always in *Hansard*. It's a great experience. But I will leave you, Mr. Speaker, with a couple that I think illustrate my point.

First off, on behalf of a great House leader in this Assembly who we talked lots about today, Brian Mason. I'm sure he's really excited to watch the Conservative Party use his quotes tonight, and I'm happy to do it.

Mr. Kenney: He's not awake.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yeah, he's probably not awake, Mr. Speaker. I'll send him *Hansard* tomorrow.

In 2015, while invoking time allocation in a similar situation, he said: it's quite clear the opposition is trying to filibuster the motion; they're trying to block the business of the House, and we can't allow the Assembly to be paralyzed. I agree with Mr. Mason that there comes a time where the majority can't allow the Legislature to be paralyzed. I will add, again, Mr. Speaker, that I want to be clear on how much time has been given by the government to be able to accommodate that. We've been working on this since Monday evening all the way until now, a significant amount of time.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the last time that time allocation was used in the 29th Legislature was to force a vote on an appointment of a legislative officer of the Assembly. At that time the now hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View said: "Mr. Gibson has devoted many years to this issue and has a proven track record. But rather than stating their objections, then voting against the appointment, we have witnessed speaker after speaker simply repeating the same talking points." I do think it's pretty clear and anybody who's watched the Assembly for the last few days realizes that we've probably now reached that stage as well with the opposition, where we're seeing speaker after speaker say the same talking points, often not even about the bill.

Then, lastly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to close with a quote from the now hon. Opposition House Leader, who was a minister of the Crown at the time, speaking on a closure motion. He says: "This Assembly has now debated Bill 6 for approximately 24 hours. Nearly all opposition members have now participated in the debate, including the leaders of each of the opposition parties." He said that on December 9, 2015, just for my friends at *Hansard*. The reality is that we are headed now to a very similar time frame.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that I will heed my friend the hon. Official Opposition House Leader's advice, and we'll move forward with this motion and get our Assembly moving again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is unfortunate that I have to rise to debate this motion of closure or time allocation that the government has now done on three different phases of this bill. Despite the fact that the Government House Leader will try to argue that time allocation wasn't used in second reading, moving the previous question is a form of closure, a move that was done after one speaker of the opposition got up to speak to second reading. I haven't double-checked with *Hansard*, but that could be a precedent, as far as moving the previous question after one speaker. I know for a fact that when we were government, we didn't do that.

Mr. Speaker, I mean, this is an example, again, of a government trying to ram through a bill in the darkness of night. Most of the debate has been while Albertans are sleeping as opposed to debating this bill during the daylight hours. We have a government that is moving a bill not only through the dead of night but also a bill that very likely is unconstitutional. It will be challenged. It will cost taxpayers money.

4:30

To every single government member that stands up and talks about how we need to get our fiscal house in order: well, first of all, the first move of this government was to reduce revenues by 4 and a half billion dollars, so you can't argue that revenue is the issue if that was your first move. Second of all, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the Government House Leader loves to talk about Bill 6 and how our government moved closure on it. That bill was debated for 23 days, over three weeks, not three days, as this bill is. Now, I appreciate that the Government House Leader will say that, well, the bill was introduced on Thursday. That is correct: Thursday afternoon, when the week is done for this Assembly. Debate started on the Monday, and as the Government House Leader has pointed out, our first night was well into the night. In fact, the Bill 2 moving of the previous question happened after midnight.

My point is this, Mr. Speaker. This is an abuse of power that the government has: to use tools to stifle debate, to muzzle the opposition, and to ensure that Albertans do not have adequate time to be able to reach out to government members and to opposition members with their feedback. Again, it is coming from the very party that at every turn tried to send every bill to committee on the reasoning that more time is needed, that we need to consult our constituents. Clearly, this government is proving through action that consultation is meaningless to them, that they don't care what Albertans have to say. They want to move their ideology and ideological bill, which is an attack on working people and working people's rights and collective rights, through as quickly as possible and, again, at a time when the majority of Albertans are sleeping.

The members opposite have in previous debates, when they were in opposition, talked about how this is heavy handed, that this is the government ruling with an iron fist. It looks like the gauntlet is on the other hand. Of course, the Premier, as a Member of Parliament, on numerous occasions spoke at length in the House of Commons, when he was an opposition member, about how it was heavy-handed, undemocratic tactics employed by the government. He found it very, very disturbing that the government would insult the very ability of members to speak on behalf of their constituents with adequate time.

Now, the government can claim that the opposition has had adequate time. I would assert that it is not up to them to decide what is adequate and what is inadequate. Members are here to represent their constituents but as well to represent Albertans throughout various ridings. I know the government loves to talk about its majority, but it did not win a tyrannical dictatorship. It is a democratic government that must respect all members, and therefore this motion is undemocratic.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 24 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:34 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Issik	Pitt
Dreeshen	Jones	Rowswell
Ellis	Kenney	Sawhney
Fir	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Long	Singh
Glasgo	Madu	Stephan
Glubish	McIver	Toews
Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Wilson
Horner	Orr	Yao
Hunter		

4:50

Against the motion:

Bilous	Dang	Phillips
Carson	Deol	Shepherd
Ceci	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.
Dach		

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10
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[Government Motion 24 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 9 Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (continued)

[Adjourned debate June 19: Mr. Ellis]

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I sense – and I could be wrong; my wife informs me that I’m wrong most of the time – that the House may like me to move for unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Government House Leader has asked for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the remainder of this afternoon’s sitting. This evening’s sitting? For Bill 9?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, for the remainder of, I guess, Wednesday’s sitting.

The Speaker: Hon. members, for clarity’s sake, the Government House Leader has asked for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the remainder of this evening’s sitting.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 9? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m happy to rise at this early or late hour to talk about Bill 9. When I spoke earlier regarding this, I talked about sort of the innocence of the Minister of Finance suggesting: “It’s just a delay. There’s nothing more to it than that. We’re just waiting for these reports to get our information.”

I think I want to revise that. I’m not so sure it is innocence anymore. I think it might be duplicitous. Certainly, we hear very clearly words like: we care about public servants; this is just a delay. But I, when the NDP was government, sat across the way and heard often from the opposition at that time not even using the words “public servants” but actually words in a more pejorative sense of it, like “those bureaucrats.” I know that, you know, going back in *Hansard* you’ll see that, which was, I feel, certainly a more pejorative term. But now they are much more careful with their words, and they are assuring us, “We care about public servants,” regardless of this bill not caring about public servants. Of course, we also have other legislation that they’ve brought forward that also is disrespecting public servants, people who are connected with the union movement.

I also want to just bring up – you know, I know that many members in the government have talked about how they’re not enamoured with what we have to say. But perhaps their own constituents: they might listen to them more. I guess I just want to reiterate that many of these contracts that are being delayed are impacting their local home communities, like for the Member for Camrose. The Bashaw Meadows lodge is one of the facilities that serves vulnerable seniors, and that’s one of the facilities that their contract is not going to be honoured or the process is delayed. Of course, this is all part of the Bethany Group. Also Rosealta Lodge in Camrose is another one, Big Knife lodge in Forestburg. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake: the Autumn Glen Lodge that’s in Innisfail. The Eckville Manor lodge: that’s in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Peace Hills Lodge in Wetaskiwin: that’s in Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin.

I guess, for the members just to realize that these are real people in their ridings, these are their constituents who are having their contracts delayed, that perhaps will bring it more to their attention, you know, if our words here in the opposition are not valued. I also encourage them to reflect because I think that this is a pretty serious thing, and it’s not just a simple delay. That’s certainly not what I see. It really is an attack on the union movement in our province. It’s not only in this bill; it’s in a previous bill that was introduced. For me this is really a significant issue because we know that unions are champions for workers. Certainly, I stand and I know that the NDP Official Opposition stands with workers in our province. We know that unions improve the wages of workers, they improve workplace safety, and they reduce inequality. These are fundamental things that are important to any society, and unions help enhance wages, workplace safety, and actually reduce inequality in our province.

In some of my remarks today I just want to acknowledge the Parkland Institute, who has done some extensive research in this area, and I’m referring to a report that actually came out in May 2014, so it was actually before the NDP government was in place. It really was doing a review of the legacy of the Conservative governments in our province that held power here for 44 years. One of the – not findings, but one of the things that they’re reporting, of course, is that Alberta has the lowest unionization rate and some of the most hostile union labour laws in our country. Our research shows that this does a great disservice to workers in the province of Alberta in general.

These two bills that are before us, Bill 9, which we are debating currently, and Bill 2, which we’ve debated previously, are an attack, again, on unions. We are going, again, backwards, and workers in Alberta are being compromised. Of course, the impact of unions in areas of wages, worker safety, income inequality are really significant and important.

When we look at some of the key findings from this report, it’s measured in terms of economic performance, wage growth in

Alberta. We know that wage growth in Alberta has been far lower than in other provinces with higher unionization rates. Women and young workers fare much better in unionized environments. Again, you know, in Bill 2 previously, there's an attack on young workers, so youth are now having their wages rolled back with youth minimum wage. We know that high unionization rates also put upward pressure for wages for nonunion workers, and I think I've talked in this House before about that. That's called the lighthouse effect. Unionized workplaces have higher wages, so the shop next door wants to have workers, too, and they need to see what the market is paying, and that influences them. That's good for workers, and I think it's good for a healthy society.

5:00

Unions play a key role in improving worker safety through education, worker empowerment, and government lobbying, and there's a strong correlation between falling unionization rates and growing income inequality in Alberta. As I said, unionization in Alberta continues to be the lowest among Canadian provinces. Workers have a particularly difficult time becoming unionized in Alberta. Applications to unionize are on the decline, and union members make up a shrinking percentage of the private-sector workforce, leaving unionization in the province increasingly restricted to the public sector. Of course, as I said before, when we were government, we updated labour laws significantly. Actually, we were able to improve them to a degree where people could become part of a union more easily. But, of course, you know, Bill 2, with their movement back to not looking at card checks anymore, which is pretty standard in all the other provinces, is taking us backwards again.

If I could just expand a bit on how it does support the wages of workers. Of course, my colleagues have shared many times who these people are. These people are nurses. These people are working in the public service, administrators, responding to calls of Albertans. They're social workers. Certainly, I was a public servant some years ago in child welfare; I've spoken about that before. These are people who are working on the front lines, people that I've heard this government does want to support, you know, and cares very much about. But in delaying this arbitration, they actually are showing the opposite of that, and that's, I guess, why, Mr. Speaker, I moved from indicating that it was sort of an innocent thing to more duplicitous. I'm concerned that workers are being disrespected.

If we look at wages, this is one of the main ways unions do support workers. When measured in terms of economic performance, wage growth in Alberta has been far lower, actually, than in any other province. But union wages in Alberta are, on average, 18 per cent higher than non-union wages, with the difference being most noticeable for women and young workers. Again, people who aren't part of sort of the more privileged classes, people who are younger or women, oftentimes get passed over. There is still, unfortunately, gender discrimination in our province, in our society.

Unions really take bold steps to support all workers, including ones that have maybe more barriers or disadvantages. You know, I'm very proud to say how important unions are, and I just want everyone to know that this bill, Bill 9, and Bill 2 are eroding some of the power that unions, I think, should have. Certainly, our government did enhance labour laws in this province, and it's very sad to see so quickly that those are being eroded by this Conservative government.

Another aspect that really is important is worker safety. Certainly, Alberta workplaces are dangerous, with official records indicating 145 occupational fatalities and approximately 30,000

serious workplace injuries in 2012. This report, as I said, was published in 2014. Employers demonstrate widespread noncompliance with provincial occupational health and safety regulations due in part to ineffective enforcement by the provincial government. Unions are the central force protecting worker safety, doing so through worker education, worker empowerment, and government lobbying.

So this is very distressing, Mr. Speaker. You know, early on in our mandate I was the minister of labour. One of the things that we did was that we expanded the number of safety officers, the people who were investigating if there was a workplace issue, and supported them to go out and make sure that workers were safe in their workplace. The public servants were somewhat shocked, really, because under the previous Conservative governments the mantra was always, "Get out of the way of business; let business do whatever they want," even compromising worker safety. They were very pleased because they were trained occupational health and safety officers. They cared very much about what they needed to do to protect workers. They didn't want people to not be going home at the end of the day. They wanted to make sure that workers were safe in their workplaces. I must say that we had a lot of public servants very proud and happy that their work became unfettered under our government.

The third key piece here on the importance of unions and why we should be respecting them and not delaying their arbitration is income inequality. The gap between the rich and poor has increased dramatically in Alberta and now is the highest in Canada. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's back to 2014, but that still holds true today, unfortunately. Income gains over the last three decades have gone almost exclusively to the wealthiest Albertans. Certainly, it's been a few years since this has been in the media a lot, but it's that top 1 per cent, right? So people who are already making significant incomes are getting even more, and that's very, very pronounced in our province. We know that rising income inequality is closely related to falling unionization rates in this province, so unions are critical to achieving a more equitable distribution of income.

Of course, you know, Mr. Speaker, we have already seen this government move boldly, giving that elite, top 1 per cent a big corporate tax break. Right away they were happy to do that while eroding the rights of workers. There are consequences for these kinds of policies. It does matter what government does. Policies matter. As this report identifies and as other reports do, oftentimes women and youth are most impacted by this.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has risen.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to respond to some of the comments I've heard here this morning. Again, I do want to acknowledge and I do appreciate the services, the exceptional services, that our public service provide Albertans day in, day out in our hospitals, in our schools, serving various government departments, and serving in communities right across this great province. They serve an exceptional purpose, and they do it and conduct their responsibilities. They serve Albertans exceptionally well, and I want to acknowledge that this morning.

Again, Bill 9 is about delaying a process, Mr. Speaker. It is about delaying a process so that this government can make thoughtful and informed decisions. This is what Albertans expect from this government. We've heard from the Member for Calgary-Klein, and I think my story during the campaign is similar to his when we were going door to door meeting with Albertans. You know, there were a variety of opinions on various issues that we would encounter, but

I would have to say this: the most consistent expectation that I heard from Albertans in my constituency was virtually regardless of age demographic, ethnic background, income level, or profession.

5:10

The concern that I heard time and time and time again was that they expected a government to be fiscally and financially responsible, to make thoughtful, informed, prudent decisions so that we did not burden future generations with ill-informed decision-making and irresponsible decision-making. Mr. Speaker, that's what Bill 9 is about. Bill 9 is about delaying a process so this government can hear from the MacKinnon panel on a path forward to balance for this province and on a path forward to continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

I also heard from many Albertans that were out of a job, quite frankly, during that time. I heard some very difficult stories from good folks who came from eastern Canada and were living in Grande Prairie without a job because they had lost it due to, certainly, a downturn in the energy industry and, I will say, as well due to some very ill-informed, really disastrous policies of the previous government such as a carbon tax, such as increasing corporate taxes by 20 per cent at a time when the industry could simply not afford it. Those were very tough stories, Mr. Speaker, but I will have to say this. Those individuals that were experiencing the toughest of financial times had an even greater expectation of this government to manage resources responsibly and prudently and wisely for this generation and the next.

That's what Bill 9 is about. We have a responsibility. Albertans have placed their trust in this government to make the decisions that will ensure we can deliver high-quality services today, tomorrow, and for the next generation. That's why I'm pleased to bring forward Bill 9, a responsible bill to ensure we have time to make the best decisions on behalf of all Albertans, including the public sector.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak in debate this evening? On the main motion, the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to rise in this Assembly once again at this beautiful, early hour today. I suppose I will just start by saying once again, you know, being a returning Member of the Legislative Assembly, being elected for the second time, I want to give my appreciation to the constituents in Edmonton-West Henday that put me here. I'm going to continue fighting against legislation like the piece that is before us.

Now, I suppose I will start – and I will not dwell too long on it – by just responding to comments that have been made in response to Bill 9 by both the Member for Calgary-Klein and also the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. You know, they've talked at length about consulting with their constituents during the election campaign and over the last week, having the opportunity to speak with many public-sector workers in their communities, and that they support the measures that this government is taking in working to get people back to work, which I can appreciate. However, I doubt that they had a conversation about legislating delays to their contracts.

You know, when we talk about election platforms, this, of course, wasn't a piece that was in there. I think we also, once again, have to reflect on the fact that, really, this government is putting large corporations ahead of the people that work so hard as public servants for our province. The government is talking about getting

our fiscal house in order before they're able to continue negotiating contracts, a few of which are due to come to a conclusion over the next few days, which, of course, is a concern of theirs and is one of the main reasons why they're slamming it through this House.

But I have concerns with the comments being made about returning to fiscal balance, considering what we've seen so far from this government. I mean, the first piece of legislation, of course, repealing the carbon tax, was a key campaign platform of theirs, but when you start pulling billions of dollars out of the economy, we need to have answers about how you're going to replace that.

To go further and give another \$4.5 billion to large corporations, taxpayers' dollars – we've heard that come up a few times tonight when we're talking about properly compensating the people that work so hard in our province, the public servants – we're not hearing about how they're going to replace that fund. When we talk about the valley line LRT or the green line LRT, this government is creating large amounts of debt, and they have not spoken about how they're going to pay for it, so I would be very interested to hear how they're coming to this conclusion that somehow they're bringing us back to balance while also blowing massive holes in the budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the fact, the bottom line of this legislation, is that the Premier and the UCP are breaking the law. Forcing legislation to delay arbitration and delay the ability of public servants to collectively bargain is an incredible concern. Not only is this piece of legislation before us, Bill 9, a concern, but really it's signalling something more. When in the First Session of this Assembly we're talking about infringing upon the rights of unions, of public servants in our communities to collectively bargain, they're signalling that there's more to come.

Now, if you look at the history of this Premier in his time as an MP in Ottawa under Stephen Harper, our former Prime Minister, you might think back to 2011, when the postal workers were having rolling strikes because they couldn't come to an agreement through arbitration. At the time the corporation of Canada Post was trying to lower the wages for new workers, among taking away other pieces of compensation. So the government, through Bill C-6, I believe, in the House of Commons, one, forced these people back to work, which I imagine we will probably see over the next four years – we'll wait and see, but I'm willing to almost bet on it; I'm not a betting man, but I would almost take that bet – and also the fact that they were willing to push through lowering the wages of these workers even past what the arbitration process had offered them, even past what Canada Post, the corporation, was going to offer them. The government came in, as far as I remember, and lowered the wages of people starting out at the company.

So we've seen a history from this Premier in his time as an MP of forcing through legislation that harmed public servants in our communities. Of course, in 2016 that piece of legislation was struck down because it did violate the Charter, and I imagine we'll see a similar argument on this piece of legislation. When the inevitable happens and the government, through arbitration, cannot come to an agreement with these public servants, I imagine we'll see further bills that violate the Charter. Of course, that will take years and much time in courts and paying for expensive lawyers before we see that answer, but there's no doubt that that will happen.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course, I would just reiterate the fact that I'm very concerned about the values of this government. With the pieces of legislation that we've seen come forward so far – attacks on youth wages, attacks on overtime pay – I reflect on a comment that I had previously mentioned, that the Premier had made before he was the Premier, about a meeting that he had late into the evening. He was quite happy that he wasn't having this conversation with unionized workers because then he would have to pay them, I believe, time and a half, which, of course, now he's

working to get rid of. So I suppose that issue has been fixed for the Premier, thankfully for him.

5:20

Of course, we've seen attacks on the abilities of our members to advocate on our behalf – I brought that up – and, further to that, giving members the ability to abstain, which really is not a good thing, in my opinion. I think we went into great detail about that. But we are sent here to have an opinion, to speak to our constituents, and to be willing to make the decision, and sometimes it's not an easy decision. You'll often find that when you bring conversations to the people of our communities, 50 per cent of people agree with something and 50 per cent of people don't, and it is our responsibility as members of this Legislature to make that final decision.

Now, I do not believe that the majority of my constituents or the majority of constituents of any people in this Legislature would believe that this legislation is in the best interests of the people of this province. The fact is that it is a bill that is pushing to bargain in bad faith. It is not something that any member of this Assembly should be happy to support, no matter the situation that our fiscal framework is in. I think that it's important to recognize the ability of public servants to collectively bargain, and this is an attack on that and once again is signalling what is to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is very concerning that, you know, we have 40 minutes left to debate on this piece of legislation. We've all been in here for the last week, for quite some time debating this piece of legislation, but really I haven't had a whole lot of opportunity to take this back to the people of my community. Now, I'm pretty sure that if I go and have that conversation, I know where they're going to sit. I don't think that government should be imposing such strong-handed legislation on the people of this province, and I think that they would for the most part agree. Of course, there will be certain people that disagree, but overall the people that work in my communities as teachers, educators, front-line nurses, social workers – the list goes on. But I think that they would be very concerned with what this piece of legislation signals.

Now, once again I would just say that the people of Alberta should take a strong look at this legislation and the process over the last week that we've seen here in the Assembly and really consider the values that a government that's willing to go forward in a process like this and bring a piece of legislation like this forward, what kind of values they're reflecting. We can see it in the history of this Premier, in his time as an MP, the way that he's voted on legislation, which we've debated before, but really also in his respect for public servants and, specifically, unions and their ability to collectively bargain and their ability to represent the members of their unions as well.

Of course, at the time in 2011, just going back to the piece of legislation, C-6, which I believe this member was a part of, I'm sure – Canada Post had a CEO, Deepak Chopra, not to be confused with the Deepak Chopra that had quotes like "Happiness is a continuation of happenings which are not resisted." He may have invoked that quote during his time while he was busting the union. It's very concerning because the Conservative government under Stephen Harper had appointed Deepak Chopra, and he was in direct conflict, being, I believe, an owner in an organization that was in direct conflict with the mandate of Canada Post.

We saw, through the union-busting that happened then, the right-to-work legislation that happened then, that they had very little regard for the public servants who were affected by these contract negotiations. Really, in that time of those negotiations and the proceedings of the House of Commons we saw a government that continuously tried to undermine the public service in order to

convince the Canadian public that a private corporation could do the job better than a public organization could.

We are going to see that over the next four years. There's no doubt about that. We've heard this government twisting itself into pretzels talking about publicly funded health care, not talking about how it's going to be delivered. Not talking about how it's going to be delivered. So we will see this government constantly undermine the public servants of this province. We will see them continue to erode the ability of workers to unionize and to collectively bargain, and there is no doubt in my mind that at some point we will see this government impose right-to-work legislation on the people of Alberta, which will be struck down by the Supreme Court, too late, of course, but it will cost Alberta taxpayers a lot of money. If that doesn't happen and if this Premier doesn't end up invoking right-to-work legislation, then I suppose I will stand in this House at some point and say: I was wrong. But I really don't believe that I will be wrong on that point.

Mr. Speaker, with that being said, I think that we have a few other members here that do wish to speak to Bill 9 in the closing time that we have left. Very disappointed the way that this process has played out, I will not be supporting this legislation, and I suppose that is all.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to all. I believe that it's really important that we highlight the actual track record of this Premier and the work that he's done to undermine workers' rights, and I was hoping that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday could get up and share a little bit more of that history if he doesn't mind.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday should he choose to respond.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm wishing I had grabbed some more water here. I do appreciate the comments from the member. Of course, once again, I mean, the actions that happened in 2011 were really one of the main reasons that I got involved with politics. I had grave concerns with the way that the Conservative Party of Canada was treating public servants across Canada, and I continue to be concerned about the conversations and the way that they're treated. Of course, the government continues to stand up, whether it's the front bench or the backbench, with the little time that they're willing to give discussion to this legislation, and they say: "We support these public servants. They work so hard. You know, we need them in our community, but we just need them to wait."

Really, as has been brought up several times in this House over the last week, many of these workers have not seen a wage increase, of course, negotiated earlier under our government – and some of these negotiations happened before – for between three and six years. I can imagine being in the private sector, and, of course, before being elected I was an electrician in the private sector. I can only imagine how I would feel as an employee going to an employer after three years and saying: "Look, you know, I've worked really hard for you. You've made some money. You're still doing good. You're profitable" – of course, the government might try and argue that – "and I think that I've worked hard enough. I think we should at least have a discussion about my compensation." Now, what this government is saying is: "Maybe just wait. Wait another year. Wait another couple of years if we had our way." I'm sure they would like to do that.

Of course, this legislation doesn't really give a real timeline about when negotiating these contracts will be finished. I'm sure that if they had it their way, it would be longer than the October 31 deadline that they have to even start discussing those negotiations. I can only imagine being an employee working hard for a company, going to my employer, saying, "You know, it's time to have this discussion," and them saying: "Well, we just need to wait. We just need to wait." That is what this government is telling the workers of this province, and it should concern them. I know it does concern them because these are nurses in our hospitals providing care to our seniors and our children. They are working very hard, and they deserve to be respected, a respect that this government is not providing them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, standing order 29(2)(a) is available. I see no one.

Anyone else wishing to speak to the bill?

Mr. Dang: Under 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: It was available, but we've moved on.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

5:30

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 9 during this period of finality. I begin by echoing some of the words that I think describe the atmosphere that this legislation is creating in business in a province where the government is claiming that they're open for business, but the poisonous words that ring true when we look at this legislation are such words as: acrimony, disarray, disharmony, disorder, dissonance, turmoil, tumult, bedlam, disorganization, lawlessness. These are hardly the types of words to describe a province that is open for business, yet this is exactly the poisoned atmosphere that this type of legislation brings to bear because people who look towards a jurisdiction to do business want to make sure that they can do business and have their contract respected.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that I administered many, many contracts when I was in my real estate career. I had about six years as a sales manager, and during that time frame I had to arbitrate many, many situations with buyers and sellers. Usually if somebody was knocking on my door and they were salespeople, they were looking for permission to do something that they already knew they shouldn't be able to do. But if they were clients, either buyers or sellers, I never actually saw anybody in my 30 years and in my six years as a sales manager who wanted to unilaterally break a real estate contract just because they thought they should be able to get a better deal. Now, if somebody failed to complete a transaction, there were consequences. Many, many severe consequences would act as a brake on such behaviour. There were financial penalties, huge financial penalties, for breaking a contract, big consequences. On top of that, there were many, many exposures to potential lawsuits, which would also act as a brake.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I know that there was a situation, which was kind of a classic situation, where a widowed seller decided that she no longer wished to sell her property because her husband had been tragically killed and she sentimentally wanted to maintain her ownership of the house as a result. A young couple, a first-time homebuyer couple, had an offer, a binding contract, to buy the property. Upon seeking legal advice, the young couple discovered that, yes, they had rights to the house. Of course, they had some compassion for the widowed seller, but there indeed was a price to pay, even in those dire circumstances, whereby the widowed seller agreed to pay to the young couple who had

contracted to buy her house in a binding contract \$5,000 to basically relent and allow her to maintain her life estate in the house where she had lived with her late husband.

Consequences are very much something that people face if they break contracts. If indeed you're a government, those consequences are also there. But this government seems to be wanting to minimize those and suggest that in Alberta contracts aren't worth the paper that they're written on. This government is announcing to the world with this Bill 9 that people can't trust a contract written by the Alberta government. Whether it's labour negotiations, whether it's oil-by-rail contracts, whether it's electricity generation, open for business is not the sign that is on the door. It's: watch out; beware; your contract may actually be pulled out from underneath you.

That poisoned business atmosphere is something that this government is generating by creating disarray and disharmony with its labour negotiations, and this Bill 9 is a prime example of what people in business are going to come to expect from this province because they know that they can't really trust whether a contract that the province has entered into is going to be honoured in the final analysis regardless of what the Supreme Court of Canada has said.

Given that this atmosphere is poisoning the business climate in the province, I'm concerned about the long-term effects of Bill 9. I, therefore, Mr. Speaker, would like to move an amendment to Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. I will give the original and all copies to the page and await your instructions.

The Speaker: That's exactly what I was going to suggest.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this will be referred to as REC1.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this amendment, and it reads as follows. Notice of amendment to Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. Mr. Dach to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act be not now read a third time, but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5(a) and (c).

Given that the amendment has now been read and the title and the subject matter are before the House, I'd like to make a few comments if I may, to provide a little flesh to the bones of the matter. I did kind of do a bit of a backdrop on my concerns to Bill 9, and that will lead me to determine even more in depth why I think the atmosphere that I described by using adjectives such as "acrimony," "chaos," "disharmony," "dissonance," "disorder," "tumult," "turmoil," "bedlam," and "lawlessness" – these are words that describe the business atmosphere that is being created by such actions as contemplated by Bill 9, where a binding labour contract is basically being torn up and the government is thinking that there will be no consequences to it, but indeed there are consequences to tearing up a binding contract.

We will see it reflected in the type of reputation that this province receives as a result of people losing confidence in the government. If you do end up doing what this Bill 9 contemplates, simply tearing up a binding agreement, it is contrary to Supreme Court direction that all governments, all contracts in fact, all parties to a contract have an obligation to deal in good faith, to be honest in their performance of those contracts. This flies in the face of that doctrine, that the Supreme Court of Canada established in a 2014 case that I've tabled in this House.

There are other historical bits of legislation that this government has already enacted or proposed to do. They've proposed to cancel the oil-by-rail contracts. They're looking at changing the electrical generation mechanisms in the province and tearing up existing contracts. They're looking at other labour negotiations, and in each case, Mr. Speaker, there's a risk to the province of having its reputation permanently damaged by the operation of this government, who will demonstrate to businesses that they can't trust to contract with this province. They don't know in the future if, indeed, this government will honour that contract. You get a pattern of disregarding legally binding contracts, and it's going to end up in reputational damage to the province.

I'm really concerned that the so-called open-for-business shingle that this government wants to hang on the province is one that is thin paper, indeed. You cannot go ahead and say on one hand that you're open for business and on the other hand that you won't honour the contracts that you enter into. It's a shameful practice.

5:40

I mean, if I ended up having clients in the real estate business who would enter into a binding contract, an unconditional contract, signed, sealed, and delivered, and they decided they just wanted to walk on it, I certainly wouldn't be advising them to be my client the second time around. The second thing: I'd be doing them a favour by inviting them to get legal opinions right off the bat. We're going to end up costing this province millions and millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, as a result of lawsuits that end up being filed against this government for passing legislation such as this, which negates by legislation binding negotiated labour contracts, and those costs are going to be borne by the taxpayers, of course, and those dollars are going to be spent by a provincial government, which indeed is doing so, creating a war room of their own against labour in this province. They like creating war rooms and this particular one is going to be aimed at their own citizens. It's a shame that this government sees fit to spend what will probably be millions and millions of dollars on frivolous lawsuits when they know, in fact, that they're going to lose those lawsuits. That war room, that war chest of provincial dollars is aimed directly at working people who are employed by the government that purportedly values their services, so it behooves me to see the rationale behind this.

The government simply looks to save money. They're looking to balance the budget, but in the same way that other Conservative governments have done so in this province over the decades, where on paper they have a balanced book but there's an infrastructure deficit, there's a deficit in services, there's a deficit that's not shown on paper that we ended up paying for for decades and we still are paying for from past Conservative governments, yet the claim is still made that we balanced the books.

Well, I'll tell you what. The books may have shown a clean slate, but the truth is that the public suffered greatly, whether it was in diminished health care services, whether it was in infrastructure that never got built, whether it was in 250 schools that our past government was actually trying to complete. That deficit is something that caused pain and hurt and damage and that we're still paying for.

Member Loyola: Deferred maintenance is one.

Mr. Dach: Pardon me?

Member Loyola: Deferred maintenance on some of those buildings.

Mr. Dach: Oh. Deferred maintenance is another thing as well.

I mean, the cost of that is not just seen in, you know, damage to your car, but it's also seen in the children that don't end up having schools that are properly functioning, they're in larger classrooms, they don't have educational assistants that they are in need of.

I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, that we're going down the same path here that we've seen before. Like we've all seen this movie in this province before, where you're going to see similar things, particularly maybe a backhanded swipe at Edmonton in terms of projects that get put on the back burner, like our LRT and public transit projects that got pushed down the road for decades because we had the audacity to vote the wrong way in Edmonton.

I know that our mayor is concerned about that as well. I know that there are infrastructure projects in the health care system that, particularly in my own riding of Edmonton-McClung, I'm very, very concerned about. We've announced a \$65 million construction project for a brand new emergency department at the Misericordia hospital when we were government. I attended that announcement with the then Health minister, and I'm very, very concerned that that project is going to be sent to the dustbin, collateral damage of this government's decision that it wants to have a paper balanced budget, but of course the deficit remains, the deficit in infrastructure spending in particular. That type of thinking has created the current emergency department at the Misericordia hospital right now. It is in dire, dire need of replacement, yet we may end up seeing that hospital needing a new ward for decades more to come.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) has expired, and I see the hon. Member for Calgary-South East is rising to speak to the main bill.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act: pretty self-explanatory to me, but if you listen to the members opposite, this delay is an attack on unions. I very much see it in their interests and in the interests of all Albertans. The entire purpose of this deferral is to get this right, to ensure that Alberta has and will continue to have . . .

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member. We're under 29(2)(a), and I know you asked to speak to the main bill. It's my mistake. I'll call on you to speak to the main bill immediately following Standing Order 29(2)(a).

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising under Standing Order 29(2)(a), and he was rising when I inappropriately asked the Member for Calgary-South East.

The Opposition House Leader is rising on perhaps a point of order or something?

Point of Order Speaking Time

Mr. Bilous: Correct, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if we can get the time back that was just used, considering that we're on closure.

The Speaker: Oh, yes. There'll be five minutes of 29(2)(a), and the approximately 90 seconds prior to my noticing my error will be added at 6:53, the end of the debate. It will now be at 6:55.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was questioning what was going on there. I was, like: what's going on? Mr. Speaker must be tired perhaps, missing out on that 29(2)(a).

Debate Continued

Member Loyola: Well, I think it's really important, the comments from the Member for Edmonton-McClung in discussing very intently the effects of balancing this budget on the backs of public-sector workers. It's not just about balancing the books on the backs of public-sector workers. It's that the services that those public service workers provide to the good citizens of this province are also going to be negatively impacted. I was hoping that the Member for Edmonton-McClung could highlight a little bit more about what those effects will be as it relates to the history of this province and how that was dealt with before under previous Conservative governments that also took the opportunity to balance the books on the backs of public-sector workers here in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has approximately three minutes remaining.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I was mentioning in my remarks, there are prime examples of exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was alluding to right in my constituency. Of course, first of all, I was talking about the need for an emergency department to be completely built, brand new, on the west end of the Misericordia hospital. I've had occasion to have family members attend that emergency department, the existing one, over the last year or so, unfortunately more than once, and I have visited there as the MLA as well to witness exactly how those front-line workers are having to make do with a very, very old and ill laid out emergency department, operating with basically hallway medicine because they don't have the capacity and the room. That emergency department should have been rebuilt a long, long time ago, well before our four-year term began, and the medical practitioners there, the administration of that hospital, the board, and the community leaders have been begging for that to be rebuilt.

We did ensure that we had funds committed to get that project under way, and I know that the design and planning for it are well under way, yet I fear that given the rumblings from this government about having to perhaps tear up labour contracts to balance the budget, to look at everything a second time around to determine if indeed the project is really needed, to me, it threatens the fact that these things might actually not go ahead.

5:50

Another project, the southwest Henday twinning. The two lanes that were going to be added, one north, one south, on that leg of the Henday are something that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Transportation were talking about in question period the other day, and that leads me to be concerned that it wasn't the lead-up to say that, yes, indeed, it's going to be going ahead. It concerns me that the Minister of Transportation is going to be saying: "Oops. Too bad, so sad. We took a look at it, and we know there's crushing traffic there in every rush hour, but we just don't have the money right now. We're going to put that off and kick that can down the road." Then we are going to be in the southwest part of that Henday bumper to bumper morning, noon, and night because that roadway needs the extra lanes.

I think that people in Calgary should be concerned about their roadway, the ring road project, as well because of the same thing. Everything is under the microscope right now, and if indeed the government is intent on being as ruthless as it seems to be to reach the so-called balanced budget nirvana, I think that many things are going to be on the chopping block, and it scares me a lot. So this is a concern.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

Now we are back on the main bill, on which the hon. Member for Calgary-South East would like to join the debate.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act: pretty self-explanatory to me, but if you listen to the members opposite, this delay is an attack on unions. I very much see it in their interests and in the interests of all Albertans. The entire purpose of this deferral is to get this right, to ensure Alberta has and will continue to have high-quality and sustainable services for the long term. I have to wonder: do the members opposite really not see the value in a brief deferral of negotiations until our government has full information on the state of Alberta's finances? I suppose it's difficult for the members opposite to appreciate the value of properly considering all the information before acting, particularly when it relates to government spending.

When the NDP were in power, there wasn't a problem that billions of hard-earned Albertan tax dollars couldn't fix. The power purchase agreements fiasco? Meh, just a couple of billion dollars. Coal power plants taking too long to naturally phase out and providing too much employment: \$1.3 billion. Failure to advance the energy industry and secure pipelines might hurt us in the election: \$3.7 billion in rail contracts it is. And if we bundle a superlab and laundry, we can get it for under a billion dollars. Fiscal responsibility and fabric softener: I love it. I wonder what their reaction was when they got the bill, the \$60 billion receipt for their poorly planned expenditures, probably something along the lines of: we should ramp up this carbon tax that nobody wants.

But I know what Albertans' reaction was. On April 16 Albertans fired the NDP as their financial managers. On April 16 Albertans could literally no longer afford an NDP government. My guess is that the NDP government didn't plan for that, just like they didn't plan when they blew through Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars over and over and over. We have committed to fix the financial disaster created by the NDP government and to approach all government spending with prudence and proper consideration. We have also committed to high-quality and sustainable health care and education, and that is what Bill 9 is about and the reason I support it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question and comment.

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to get up in this place and speak, especially when my hon. colleague from Edmonton-McClung moves an amendment. I think this amendment is something that is so important, that all members of the Assembly have the opportunity to debate. Unfortunately, we won't as the government has used time allocation to stifle free speech and democracy in this place today. But I think it's important that we look at the content of this amendment and at the content of the bill and realize how important it is that we have the opportunity to recommit this to Committee of the Whole.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

While this government pushed forward and rammed this legislation through in the cloud of darkness, in the shadow of darkness, through the night, the people that this will be affecting were either working shift work and unable to follow the debate, or perhaps they were sleeping as they were anticipating a busy day ahead of them here, Mr. Speaker. Instead, we now see that the time

has come when many of them will be rising, many of the people under the charge of the ministers right here, like the Minister of Environment and Parks. His very parks and forestry workers will be rising right now. Their alarms will be going off shortly, and they'll have the opportunity to tune into Assembly TV and watch us debate here as their rights are taken away, as that minister votes to take the rights away from his own workers.

That's something that we should have an opportunity to debate, the important amendments that we would have in Committee of the Whole, and be able to consider the clauses in a more thorough way in front of Albertans and to have people actually observe what is being brought forward here. Bringing through the bill with closure in the shadow of darkness is the opposite of open government, it's the opposite of transparency, and it shows that this government has no respect for the democratic process, has no respect for showing Albertans the truth of what is going on with this bill, about how this bill was a bad-faith bargaining bill, how it does none of the things the government purports that it will do. The government has spoken at length about how it's simply a delay in process, but indeed it's actually an attack on rights. It's an attack on the constitutional rights of workers, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, it's an attack on the constitutional rights of workers who this government is charged and sworn to protect and who have served our great province of Alberta. I think that's a shame.

I heard at some great length members of the government speak today and last night as well, and I think they spoke at length about how their constituents supported them attacking the rights of their fellow Albertans. Frankly, I find that pretty hard to believe. As we have moved through the very few days the government has granted for debate on this bill, we here in the opposition heard from hundreds and thousands of Albertans who are so strongly opposed to this bill. They are so strongly opposed to this bill, and they've asked us why we can't just make some amendments to make it better, to make a bad bill better. That's something that I know you, Mr. Speaker, have used in the past at length as a term to try to improve bills of the government. I think that you would appreciate that the opposition today is trying to make a bad bill better. Bringing it back to Committee of the Whole to bring back more of those amendments and allow Albertans to watch us bring back more of those amendments: I think that would be something that all members should welcome, to have that open debate and have that open discussion here in the Assembly.

I know that there are going to be people that are waking up right now and tuning in, and perhaps they haven't realized because there's been so little debate. The government has stifled debate to such an extent, and they've forced it through in such a short amount of time, only, really, three days of actual debate here, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps they haven't realized that their rights are about to be stricken away, stolen from them, and that the government is about to attack their very livelihoods and their families. That's something that I think teachers and nurses and paramedics and forestry and parks workers and so on will be very concerned about, when they find out what the government has done in the shadow of darkness here. I think that that's something that all members should be aware of, should be concerned about.

I mean, there are over 180,000 workers that are going to be affected by this. It affects many unions across this province and many of the workers that work under this government, and those workers deserve the opportunity to have this discussion in the House. Really, our constituents deserve the opportunity to have this discussion in the House. When we look at what this bill does, what this bill does is that it goes after our workers, it goes after the people who are trying their hardest to make this province a better place, and it goes after the people that work in every single one of our constituencies. It doesn't matter who we are in this Assembly or where we come from in this

Assembly, Mr. Speaker; every single one of us has public servants that work in our ridings and live in our ridings. I think those public servants and those public service workers deserve the opportunity to have their MLAs speak on their behalf here.

It's really important that the government has chosen to stifle debate and not have that happen and not have their members talk about why they think it's okay to attack the people that live in their ridings, attack the families that live in their ridings. But that's the government's prerogative. I mean, it's their prerogative, again, to disrespect this Assembly and hand out earplugs and put them in all throughout the night. It's the Premier's prerogative to do what I consider one of the most offensive things I've seen in the last four and some years that I've been here. Indeed, some members who have been here longer than me would say, Mr. Speaker, that they've never seen anything like it. They've never seen a Premier disrespect this Assembly in such an obvious way.

6:00

That's something that I think is really shocking. It sets the tone for the next four years of debate here, Mr. Speaker. Really, Albertans are watching. Albertans are watching the government not listen, essentially. They're watching the government intentionally obstruct our ability to speak to them in this Assembly. That's something that's a real shame. I would say that the Premier should be ashamed and the government should be ashamed that they are using such childish tactics. But, really, I know they're not ashamed. They've said as much. So, really, I feel almost embarrassed for them. I think that they should get up in this House and apologize for disrespecting democracy. They should get up in this House and apologize for disrespecting the process of democracy here and how we should be allowed to debate in this House. If the government feels that Albertans don't deserve to have a voice and that the voice that Albertans do have shouldn't be listened to, then that is the government's prerogative as well.

I mean, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, elected officials need to learn that their job is indeed to be here and debate and not to complain about the hours that we have to put in, because what we do is try to pass the best possible legislation for Albertans. This amendment would allow us to do that. It would allow us to go back and re-examine the clauses of this bill. It would allow us to make further changes that would make a bad bill better, and that's something that I think all Albertans would want to see this government allow and do here. I think they would actually prefer to see this government rescind their time allocation and allow proper debate so that Albertans could be notified of what will happen here. But we know that's not going to happen. I'd hope that we can go back to committee and make some changes to make a bad bill better. That is all this opposition wants to do. I know that my colleagues on this side of the House have spoken at length on why this bill is bad, why this bill attacks the rights of workers, attacks the rights of unions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that it attacks the rights of unions because I know that "unions" isn't a bad word. Some of the members of the government caucus may – what that shows is a blatant disregard for the rights of people that live in our ridings. It's not just the ridings on the opposition side here; it's ridings all across this province in every single community. We need people like nurses, like teachers, like paramedics to take care of us in our communities and take care of our families and take care of our kids as they go to school. We don't want to be hanging these large, heavy, illegal, Constitution-breaking acts over their heads when they should be trying to focus on manning the emergency rooms or taking care of kids and teaching them in our classrooms.

It's a shame that the government either doesn't understand that or they just don't care. Mr. Speaker, the longer and longer we go on here

and as the opposition members have spoken quite at length here as to why this is a bad bill and why it needs to go back to committee and have the concepts brought forward, it becomes pretty clear they either are wilfully not listening – I mean, the earplugs can probably speak to that – or they really don't care. I think that perhaps there's a bit of both going on there. Their lack of regard for the workers that they're attacking that are under their charge is blatantly obvious. As we see, the minister has refused to speak to this bill. We see that the minister has refused to speak at length to the importance of taking away their rights and why their rights are not as important as any other workers' rights in this province.

I think there is a bit of both here. They don't want to learn how much this hurts families and how much this hurts workers in this province. They also don't care, and they don't care to learn either, Mr. Speaker. When they wear bright orange earplugs in this place, it's an affront to democracy. It's an affront to this Chamber. It's an affront to the members of this Assembly. [interjection] As members of the government laugh at that, I think that's actually something that they should be embarrassed about because they're laughing at hundreds of years of tradition of us having parliaments in the Westminster system to debate in these Assemblies.

That is why we were sent here. That is why we were sent to this Legislature, to debate and hear perspectives from all sides of the Assembly. That is why we are Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are given that title. We are entitled to be here and have speech and debate in this Assembly. But government members don't think that's important. They would rather put in their earplugs and tap away on their phones and their laptops. That speaks to how little they care about what Albertans have to say and hear in this Assembly. It's something that really is disappointing.

I would say that they should be ashamed, but again I know they aren't ashamed. I would say that, really, the members of the opposition here and, I think, Albertans are disappointed that the Premier would have a long-winded conversation across the entire Chamber instead of listening to debate that he was sent here to do in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that's something that's his prerogative, but I think that Albertans expect better. Albertans expect a Premier that isn't going to play childish games, isn't going to walk around giggling, handing out earplugs in the middle of the night. They expect a Premier that's going to work for Albertans. I don't think that when they elected this Premier, they expected him to be walking around giggling like a schoolchild, handing out earplugs in this Assembly.

It's a matter of fact. That's what he did. We all saw it here in this Assembly. I think it's something that's very important to point out on the record, that he walked around this entire Chamber, disrespecting the members who were speaking, just to hand out tools that would obstruct his own members from being able to hear the debate. That's something that I think is shameful. I know the Premier is not ashamed, but I think it's something that Albertans are disappointed in. Albertans expected better and Albertans want better from a Premier who purported to state – in fact, the Premier made a video at quite a bit of length during the campaign that stated: you will miss graduations, and you will spend long nights in the Assembly, and you will be fighting for the rights of all Albertans. Instead, what we see is the Premier deciding that the Assembly is a place for games and fun and deciding that he just wants to go around and hang out with his friends.

Mr. Speaker, that's the Premier's prerogative, but instead the opposition will stand here and fight in this House.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order has been called.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), language that creates disorder. The hon. member is talking in great detail, making, quite frankly, accusations against the Premier, his intent to create disorder in this Chamber, against every member of the government's intent to create disorder in the Chamber. First of all, I find that ironic, coming from that member, from that party as well. If anybody who has been in here has ever watched a question period lately, they would know which party in this Assembly is going out of their way to create disorder and, quite frankly, would also know the great work the Premier has done bringing order to this Chamber. I've enjoyed the calmness of this side of the House, as I'm sure you have.

When that member gets up and makes those types of accusations against the hon. Premier, the Premier of the province, who's sitting in here this evening, listening to the speech of that hon. member, who could then present something beside making accusations against the Premier, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that that language creates disorder.

The Acting Speaker: Is anybody else wishing to speak?

Mr. Dang: Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a matter of debate, a debate of the facts of what happened here in this Assembly. The hon. Government House Leader spoke to how I was intending to create disorder in this Assembly. As you can clearly see and hear, no disorder was created. So I'd ask you to rule that it's not a point of order and allow me to continue with my speech.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, Member. You know, I was about to rise myself. I think you were treading a little bit on the edge there about causing some disruption in the House, so I would caution you to reflect on the amendment to the bill and speak to that, please.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I mean, very clearly here the stifling of debate continues. This Assembly would do well to go back to committee and speak at length on how we can improve this bill rather than plugging their ears and pretending that this bill won't hurt workers.

[The Speaker in the chair]

But, really, we know that's not true. That's why we've moved this amendment. That's why it's important, this amendment. It's because we know that we need to go back and not hand out earplugs. We need to go back and take those earplugs back, if the Premier would take them back from his members, and then allow them to listen to the debate in this Assembly, allow the committee to proceed with its good work.

Unfortunately, the committee was not able to proceed with its good work, perhaps because of what the Premier did earlier by handing out those earplugs so that his members could not hear what the members of the opposition and other members who spoke in this Assembly were proposing. I think that's something that Albertans are going to be disappointed about, Mr. Speaker. I think it's something that members of the opposition here are disappointed about. But that is the prerogative of the government, to disrespect this Assembly, to disrespect the process of this Assembly and disrespect the process of Committee of the Whole.

That's why I think it's important that we recommit to Committee of the Whole. If we go back, we can then have that debate properly.

The Premier could apologize for trying to disrupt this House by not allowing his own members to hear this debate. Then we'd be able to have that discussion and move those amendments that are important to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, at great length I might add that we could have added many amendments that would have made a bad bill better. I mean, those are words you've used yourself while you were on this side of this House, that sometimes there's a bad bill that the government introduces and the opposition just wants to make it better. I think that's what was happening here.

I mean, obviously, the Premier didn't think his members should listen to suggestions for improvement. Those are the facts. I mean, he walked around and handed out devices to impair the listening of members. I think that's something that is an affront to the democracy of this House. It's an affront to us being able to do our jobs in this House. Our job is to speak to all members of the Assembly. I think that is something that we in the opposition here are proud to do. We're proud to speak on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of all workers in Alberta, who are having their rights taken away. As they wake up right now, I'm sure they're turning on their radios and turning on their TVs to Assembly TV, Mr. Speaker. They're watching in this Assembly right now that their rights are being taken away. The members' and minister's own workers who are under their charge are waking up right now and realizing that the minister is about to vote to take their rights away.

I think that's a shame, so I'd encourage all members to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

6:10

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, due to my proximity, can't help but enjoy the debate from my colleague from Edmonton-South. Indeed, it would be fair to say that there is no other quite like the MLA for Edmonton-South here in this Assembly, and I would appreciate the opportunity to hear him conclude his thoughts on this particular bill.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I endeavour to always keep my comments as brief and succinct as I can, and that is why I would take this opportunity to speak at just a little bit of length as to why it's so important we bring this back to committee. The very act of obstructing the committee from doing its work earlier, I think, should mean that we should go back and do that work properly and not wear the earplugs and not ignore the amendments and not ignore the concerns that are being raised by duly elected members of this Assembly.

I think every member of this Assembly should listen to the amendments. They should get up and actually speak to the amendments, and they should get up and do what we were sent here to do and what is our job, which is to debate legislation in this House, to have strong and thoughtful debate on how we can make bills better in this Assembly. I think that any member who accepted those earplugs from the Premier when he went around handing them out, giggling like a schoolgirl, during Committee of the Whole, which we should recommit back to, should come and apologize to this Assembly for disrespecting other members in this House in such a gross manner.

It is a gross disrespect to this Assembly to try and ignore what other members have to say, to try and disrespect and disregard what other members have to say and not do the work that their constituents sent

them here for. I've spoken quite a bit at length about how it is disrespectful to this Assembly, but I think what it's more disrespectful to is their own constituents, because their constituents are the ones that expect them to do debate in this Assembly, especially in Committee of the Whole, where substantive amendments are brought forward, which is what we're trying to recommit to right now. Especially in Committee of the Whole, where substantive amendments can make bad bills better, you would expect your MLAs and your elected officials to listen and reflect and consider whether to make changes. Unfortunately, it looks like the government members chose not to. They chose to disrespect democracy in this place, and that's why I want to give them a second chance.

I believe in second chances. I believe people can change, so I'd like to give all members of the Assembly a second chance to get up in committee and apologize for disrespecting us the first time and disrespecting their constituents the first time and then have a strong debate and reconsider amendments and consider whether we should move forward with this bill or not or whether we should make a bad bill better, Mr. Speaker. That's something I think is very important. I see members of the government are laughing away over there because they think it's not important to listen to debate in this House, that it's not important to have a strong, thoughtful discussion in this House. That's the prerogative of those members, especially the government whip, who doesn't have to do his job here in the Assembly and listen to debate and vote on bills here. I mean, the government actually introduced changes to the standing orders so they could abstain from their job, and that's their prerogative, but I think that we should go back to Committee of the Whole so that we can have that debate, so we can do our jobs and make a bad bill better.

We can improve the legislation that's been brought here to this Assembly. It's something that I wish and I hope all members would be open to. I think that certainly members of the government caucus and government backbench understand how disgraceful it is to disrespect this Assembly and their constituents, and I hope they get up and apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is a really important amendment, that we should go back to committee and consider those amendments that were neglected in the first place and then have proper discussion on them. I think that discussion would improve our outcomes of this bill. It would make it so that our workers who are having their rights taken away this morning with very little opportunity to speak under the cover of darkness – I think that those workers would appreciate it if we had the opportunity to go back to Committee of the Whole. Those workers would appreciate it if we could have some of that debate. Now, I believe that the sun is probably coming up outside a little bit, Mr. Speaker, so with some sunlight they would appreciate being able to listen and see the debate that is happening in this Chamber and understand the ramifications this will have for their families, for their communities, and for the ability for them to service their communities as public workers.

I encourage everyone to accept this amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are on the main bill. I might just add that you can both sit down at this point in time. I've made my decision about who I'll recognize. I just want to provide a little bit of commentary.

As I was unable to have the pleasure of hearing all of the comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, I thank the chair who was able to rule on the point of order. What I might just say is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South might use significantly more caution when making accusations about other members in the Chamber, particularly when members of both the government and the opposition have had electronic devices that may impair their hearing for whatever reason they might choose to

do that. Whether they're working on other things, I have noticed many members in the Chamber throughout the night with earphones and other things. I would just perhaps provide some additional caution to the Member for Edmonton-South.

With that, I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, who has risen to speak to the debate.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to, before I get into this, note how proud I am of our Premier and his efforts to not only raise the level of decorum but also, as a result, the dialogue in this House, which is something that I heard loud and clear from my constituents in Calgary-Klein as I was door-knocking and the general frustration about the decorum and the dialogue and the debate that was happening in the past. The fact is that, again, over the last several hours we have had a great back-and-forth discussion in this House. We have heard from several government members as well as several opposition members on this topic. I would say that this has been one of the best evenings of debate that we have had. I think it speaks to our commitment to having a good dialogue.

The other thing I wanted to quickly note – and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your comments on this. Again, I don't want this to turn into a game of tattletale, but as we've had members that have been kindly pointing out actions, whether or not they were actually happening in this House when the member was saying that, talking about the importance of listening to the debate and hearing from the opposition: I have been paying attention. I've been thoughtfully sitting here and paying attention and hearing what each of the members has had to say, but while I've been watching and listening to you guys, I've also observed members in this House reading comic books, racy comic books, in front of me and the Member for Edmonton-City Centre and the Member for Edmonton-South doing online shopping while we were in here, while I'm trying to listen to the members here.

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader has risen on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, point of order: 23(h), (i), and (j). The reason why earlier the Member for Edmonton-South raised the question about recording was because the member for – forgive me; I don't know the constituency.

Mr. Getson: Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you.

Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland had divulged himself what he was doing, which was listening to the amps or measuring the volume of the House, which was divulged on his own.

Members, there is a tradition in this House that members do not identify members, nor what they are doing, whether they are working on other projects, signing cards, writing correspondence, working online, which, of course, Mr. Speaker, you will be very well aware of – I apologize; my words are not coming so quickly to me at this hour.

The Member for Calgary-Klein, by calling out members: I believe that falls in line with speaking about absences or the members that aren't present as well. I jumped up on a point of order because I think the member should cease going down this path that he is going on.

6:20

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, first, Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief because of the hour, and I know that time is important to the opposition. I do sympathize a little bit. The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein used to tattletale on me quite often when we were younger as well, so I hear that argument.

With that said, though, while I do sympathize with that, I do want to point out that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South just spent about 15 minutes in this Chamber calling out individual members of this Chamber. I know the Speaker has addressed that, so I don't want to spend too much time on that. I want to respect that, but the point is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South called out individual members of this Chamber and asked them to rise to explain these types of things, including the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, who, from what I see, is rising to address the direct question that was asked by the Member for Edmonton-South, and he is using examples of members of the Opposition House Leader's party who are on their computers looking at cartoons or online shopping or those types of things. I think his point is well taken.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, I will encourage my little brother from Calgary-Klein to move on with his comments.

The Speaker: Thank you for the interjections. I don't think that we need to hear from the Member for Calgary-Klein on this particular issue, as I'm prepared to rule.

Herein lies the challenge before the Assembly. When members effort to walk down this road of making accusations, saying that this member is doing that or otherwise, both the Member for Edmonton-South and now the Member for Calgary-Klein, decorum in the Chamber is inevitably going to deteriorate and create disorder. I am sympathetic to the position that the Opposition House Leader has raised about how we treat each other in this Assembly, and members have a smattering of responsibilities that they need to take care of. The challenge here is that the decision that the Member for Calgary-Klein has made is to bring issues to the debate that are not necessarily all that relevant to the issue that is at hand. The issue that we are debating is a recommittal motion on the bill, Bill 9, and if both the Member for Edmonton-South and the Member for Calgary-Klein had kept their remarks more relevant with respect to the amendment, my sense is that decorum would not have deteriorated. As such, I would encourage the Member for Calgary-Klein to get back to the matter at hand and for all members, for the remaining time that we have left today, to focus purely on what is relevant to the debate in this Chamber.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Debate Continued

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly want to get back to the topic at hand. I'm certainly new in the Chamber, too, learning about this process from veterans in this Chamber and following their example. Thank you for the direction on that, and we'll move on. Again, we've heard a lot of debate in the House in regard to whether or not we're paying attention. I just wanted to make sure that the folks in the House – we rebutted and made sure that it was noted that we are sitting here. We are paying attention, and we are excited to be a part of this debate.

With that, I'll get to it a little bit here. Getting back to this debate, we were talking about the importance of hearing from our constituents, knowing that that's what I've been doing and spending my time doing. I also wanted to note that I have several family members that are public servants. I have a sister-in-law who is a

nurse. I have a brother who is a teacher. I have another sister-in-law who is a paramedic. I have another sister-in-law who's a lab tech. The hon. House leader and myself have lots of opportunity at family events to hear from our government workers in addition to what we're hearing from our own constituents.

One of the big things that I continuously hear from front-line government workers is the need to improve overall efficiency in our system, that we have so many opportunities to get better value from our government services. Again, this is part of why I think we need to make sure that we're getting all the information that we possibly can in order to inform our decisions on how we move forward as a government when it comes to public services, taking that time to hear from them, to dig into this, and make sure that we have all the best information available for us to move forward. It's about due process, emphasizing that effort to take that time and hear from our front lines.

I think the other thing we've heard a lot from, too, is just this concern over growing and mounting government debt and the need to have a sustainable path forward, so taking the time to figure that out. Again, that's why I commend the Minister of Finance and our Premier and this government for that fiscal responsibility, and I'm very proud of government and its efforts to do that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, we are back on the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to what we know is the final reading for Bill 9. You know, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." That's from, of course, the Book of Ecclesiastes, the man Solomon, his book of poetry, just recognizing that things move in cycles. We begin at one side; we move to the other. Here in this Chamber every day we can look up and we can see the sunrise and the sunset courtesy of Alberta indigenous artist Mr. Alex Janvier. On this bill again we find ourselves coming full circle in our debate, in our discussion; indeed, recognizing that, as I said earlier, this is a story we have seen played out before under many different Conservative governments in this province.

Indeed, you know, that bit from Ecclesiastes in some ways talks about futility, the futility of committing the same actions over and over and not seeming to get ahead, recognizing there are natural cycles. But then there are these sorts of situations; again, we have this government which is moving forward and bringing legislation to break contracts with Albertans. Now, the Minister of Finance rose and he spoke earlier on this particular bill, the bill in which, I would dare say, speaking of seasons, anyone trying to keep an eye on the shifting seasons of this particular bill as this government rushes it forward would probably get a severe case of whiplash, noting that they're in such a rush to move forward on this through the seasons, to plant the seed and reap their fruit, then plunge us into, seemingly, our winter of discontent.

But this minister rose in this House and he attempted to, in his view, clarify what the intent of this bill is and what the government is trying to do. He said that it would be fiscally irresponsible for this government not to go in and break contracts with workers. Mr. Speaker, what I would say the responsible thing is is to honour a deal that is made. The responsible thing is for government not to set the precedent that when it is convenient for them, that when it works better for their particular interests, they will simply use the heavy arm of the law to reach in and break contracts at their whim.

You know, often in this House we talk about uncertainty; indeed, members of the government caucus when they were in opposition

talked often about the damage that was done by creating uncertainty for businesses. They claimed that business didn't know which way the government was going to turn, what they were going to do, or how they could possibly invest and do their best to create prosperity in Alberta.

6:30

Well, I dare say, Mr. Speaker, as I noted in a question the other day to the Minister of Health, that uncertainty works for workers, too, and this government is choosing to create tremendous uncertainty in the public sector. For all the promises that they make standing in this House, for all the lovely words that they are finally coming around to saying, as they realize the attention that is being paid, the potential damage this is doing to their political capital, we recognize that they are creating uncertainty amongst our public service. I've heard it from many. My colleagues have talked about the others that they have spoken to who have heard it, too. They do not trust this government – indeed, why should they? – when this is the first step that they choose to take in their interactions with the public service in this province.

The minister talked about wanting to be sure that we had a fair process – a fair process – as government exercises its unilateral ability to reach in and break a contract, to break a deal. At which point now can workers ever trust that the government is not simply ever going to do that again, simply choose whenever it likes? If it dislikes the way a particular negotiation has gone, if it decides that it needs to change things for its own political convenience, that it's not simply going to rise in this House and again table a bill like this and force it through in the dead of night? That is not a fair process, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, the minister spoke about how not bringing forward this bill would be unfair to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, as I also noted the other day in my question to the Minister of Health, we are talking about Albertans, Albertans who sat down and had their representatives negotiate a fair deal. This is why I believe that this bill needs to be referred. These Albertans put their trust in their elected representatives. They participated in the set rules and processes of a system, that was there to protect them and their interests, in which they participated in good faith, and indeed our government did as well.

They signed a deal that they expected to be upheld in good faith, and this government is breaking it. That, Mr. Speaker, is unfair to those Albertans. Indeed, if this is where the government goes in terms of treating the very workers that it employs, for whom it is directly responsible, how can we trust them in good faith in any other aspect of their work? How can we trust them in business relationships or other contracts that this government may undertake if this government is simply willing to tear up, shred a deal when it's for their convenience?

The minister said that this is not a step they take lightly. Well, it's certainly a step they took rather quickly, Mr. Speaker. It's a step they took without giving any indication to Albertans that this was something they were looking at doing. Even though, I would suspect, they were well aware of this during the election campaign, they chose to hide that from Albertans. They told them that they would strike their blue-ribbon panel.

I cannot believe that this Premier, a man who I have clearly seen is a man of deep study, a very strategic thinker, who informs himself very well before he takes an action or before he moves forward, did not understand the implications of what was coming forward with public service contracts. I find it hard to believe that he was suddenly blindsided on entering office. Yet he and his members made absolutely no mention of the fact that they would, by force of law, force – not ask, not politely work with or negotiate but force –

public-sector workers in the province of Alberta to forgo the rights that they duly negotiated in their contract.

Now, we recognize that the government has this impending deadline tomorrow. As the arbitration would continue, they want to make sure that they push this law through so that they can break that contract before they have to deal with that, again, to act in bad faith for their own convenience. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't care whether they took this step lightly or not. The fact that they are taking it is an insult to public-sector workers in this province, the fact that they are willing to tear up these contracts, that were negotiated in good faith, with barely a shred of notice to those on whom they are imposing this.

This has all taken place, Mr. Speaker, within the span of a week. Again, anyone trying to keep track of this government's movement on this bill could well get whiplash. We know that this government has chosen to impose closure in this. They have chosen to limit debate, to limit us to only the few days that we have had in this Assembly, in which we as the opposition have diligently tried to make the best use of that time as we can to make sure that Albertans will be aware of the decision this government is making. Indeed, if this government is as proud of what they are doing as they claim they are, then by all means they should be quite happy to have Albertans fully understand it and be informed about it.

We've taken what opportunity we have available to make that known, to make that clear. I know our time is still limited. We don't have too much of it left this morning, so I won't take up too much more of it myself. But I will say that I have appreciated this opportunity to be here to represent the voice of my constituents, indeed, to take a break at times. Whether or not the Member for Calgary-Klein appreciates my taste in reading material or the random Internet ads that might pop up around it, I can tell you that Action Comics featuring Superman is an entertaining read.

That said, I appreciate the stamina of all members of this Assembly in taking part in this debate this evening. I've made it quite clear what I think of the government's intentions and plans with this bill. They've made it quite clear how they view that. In about 20 minutes we will have our vote, and then from there it will be up to Albertans to judge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. I just had a couple of comments or thoughts that I wanted to share this morning. As the Member for Edmonton-City Centre spoke, he started out by talking about the importance of making sure that we don't break contracts. As you know, Mr. Speaker, as opposition we had the unfortunate opportunity to listen and watch as the NDP government continued to unravel and break contracts with our PPAs in this province, that ended up costing Albertans upwards of about \$2 billion. It's unfortunate for that member to say that he thinks what's going to happen with this is that we're going to break contracts, but he doesn't know. He's assuming that that's what this process is all about. Yet, in reality, this is about being able to take a reasonable approach to looking at Alberta's finances after this NDP government broke these PPA contracts.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election, when I was door-knocking, I was in Foremost. I was doing a meet-and-greet there. I had the opportunity to have a couple come up afterwards. They were an older couple, and they came up and said that they had voted for the NDP in every election where they were able to vote. In fact, this

gentleman had actually driven Grant Notley around in that area, drumming up votes.

6:40

Yet he said to me: this year I will be voting for the United Conservative Party. He said: for the first time I understand the concept that we need to have something that is sustainable, that the reason why the UCP is trying to be able to get the financial situation back on track is so that we can provide these wraparound services, the things that we hold so dear in Alberta: health care, a proper sustainable education system, good policing, and firefighters. He said: the reason why I am now voting for the United Conservative Party is because finally I understand the connect between having a strong, robust economy and sustainable wraparound services for Albertans. This is why he wanted to vote for the United Conservative Party.

What we've been asked to do by Albertans is to be able to have a reasonable approach, to be able to put together a go-forward plan for our children and grandchildren that can be sustainable. It's folly for the members opposite in the NDP to believe that you can continue to go towards \$100 billion of debt and still be able to provide in the future opportunities for good health care and good education. It's fiction; it's fantasy; it's only the things you read in comics.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side have pledged to Albertans, have committed to take a reasonable look at the books. We have struck the panel. The blue-ribbon panel is designed specifically to give us the information that we need so that we can go forward in the proper way, so that Albertans can know that there is going to be a sustainable system of wraparound services for them not just for today but into the future. When we presented to Albertans, we presented that to them, that concept of sustainability, and they were completely fine with the idea that we would be able to accomplish that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other argument that we've heard ad nauseam here is this idea that we are taking away their right to be able to represent their people. Unfortunately, at 19 hours we are nowhere near taking that away from them.

The Speaker: Hon members, we are back on the amendment. I see that the hon. Premier has risen.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, allow me to thank you and all personnel of the Assembly for their tremendous dedication and hard work. We appreciate their facilitating the work of this place. I'd like to congratulate and thank all members who have been participating in this debate around the clock as we approach 7 a.m.

The Member for Edmonton-South suggested that I was disrespecting this debate, that I wasn't respecting the Assembly. The fact is that I've been respectfully listening to speeches here this evening for some 11 hours and last night for some seven hours, about 18 hours of the nearly 24 hours that this matter has been debated in this Assembly. I've listened respectfully to all of the opposition speeches and those from the government side as well, Mr. Speaker.

I'm speaking against the recomittal amendment brought forward by, I believe it is, the Member for Edmonton-McClung because the Assembly has already decided to pass this matter through to third reading and I do support the adoption of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, at third reading.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre suggested moments ago that – I guess I should be flattered by his attribution to me of great sort of omniscience. The truth is that we were rather busy creating a new political party and running a very vigorous campaign, and I only became aware of the current state of play with respect to collective bargaining agreements with public-

sector unions in the transition phase, shortly after our government took office several weeks ago. I think that about two weeks but perhaps a week into the term of this new government senior officials from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board and from Executive Council informed me that a number of the current agreements were coming up for wage reopeners in the weeks to follow and that this new government does not yet have adequate information to enter into those negotiations on the wage reopeners and that we need a really solid understanding of the current fiscal reality.

That is why the fourth “whereas” clause of Bill 9 says:

Whereas significant changes have occurred in Alberta’s economy since the 2018-19 Third Quarter Fiscal Update and Economic Statement . . . [and]

Whereas the Government of Alberta needs to gather and fully consider the information and advice prior to wage arbitration hearings under collective agreements in respect of 2019-2020 that affect the Government of Alberta as an employer or funder,

that advice coming from

. . . the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta’s Finances, an expert panel appointed by the Government of Alberta, will deliver a final report by August 15, 2019, and time is required to gather . . . information on Alberta’s economy and the Government of Alberta’s financial state.

I and the ministers were presented with the emerging deadlines on wage reopeners, and we were briefed on the very significant fiscal implications therein, with some unions, I gather, making at least initial requests in the arbitration there for 5 or 6 per cent increases. At the same time, we’re being advised by Treasury Board and Finance that the fiscal situation of the province has deteriorated significantly since the former government’s third-quarter update. The advice we received is that we needed, to use an idiomatic phrase, to hit the pause button on this arbitration until we could come to the table in good faith with all of the necessary, requisite information. That’s exactly the responsible position that we’ve taken.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve heard over the last 24 hours of debate no end of conspiracy theories. We’ve heard about this bill being, according to some NDP members, analogous to slavery, to jackboot authoritarianism, to an end to unionism, to an attack on fundamental human rights. Bone-chilling accusations of every kind have been levelled at what is, frankly, I humbly submit, a modest effort by a new government to truly understand the fiscal context in which we will be negotiating collective bargaining agreements that collectively represent some 50 per cent of the \$49 billion in expenditures of the Alberta government. What government would not ask for a few more weeks, a few more months to actually have a proper understanding before proceeding?

It would be grossly irresponsible, I submit, for us to have ignored the advice that we received from the senior public service, to say, “No; we’re just going to move ahead based on a mandate from the previous government, based on dated information on our fiscal state,” which has since deteriorated, when we have some of the leading experts in Canada working right now to provide us with comprehensive, timely information and advice on our fiscal situation, a panel chaired by one of the most highly regarded modern Canadian Finance ministers, a New Democrat, Dr. Janice MacKinnon, also in her own right, by the way, a highly regarded Canadian historian; co-chaired by Dr. Mike Percy, the former shadow Finance minister of the Liberal Party in this place, the former dean of business at the University of Alberta, a man of widely accepted acclaim and deep economic credibility; as well as the former Deputy Minister of Finance in the province of British Columbia; as well as Mr. Mowat, the former chief executive officer

of Alberta Treasury Branches; as well as Jay Ramotar, who has been a deputy minister in I think at least five Alberta governments.

I want to thank on the floor of this Assembly those remarkable individuals for having given up much of their spring and summer to do a very difficult task, a deep dive into Alberta’s finances to help inform the fiscal policy of this new government and this province. I believe we owe it to them to get the information before we move ahead with decisions which ultimately could affect 50 per cent of the expenditures of the Alberta government, Mr. Speaker. About \$24 billion of the \$49 billion that we spend is represented by public-sector wages, salaries, and benefits.

6:50

I know that what I’m about to say gets dismissed by the opposition as being trite, but it’s true, Mr. Speaker. I and this government do respect the work of not only our public servants but those in the municipalities, universities, schools, hospitals, agencies, boards, and commissions, those in the broader public sector. I can tell you authentically – and you can speak to any of the senior public servants, for that matter – that I’m pretty sure that most of the front-line folks that worked in the departments that I had the privilege of serving in in Ottawa will say that I had a fantastic relationship with the public service there. I respected their advice, their fearless advice, their loyal implementation.

In a couple of departments over the course of several years, with their support and advice, I led deep and, I think, pretty positive reforms, complex policy reforms, even during a time of fiscal restraint, when we were reducing, in the two major departments I was at, by an average of 7 per cent operational expenditures without, I believe, negatively affecting the delivery of services. I trusted the public service to come forward with advice on how that could be done without layoffs but, rather, with attrition where it was necessary and without reductions in public-sector compensation.

Mr. Speaker, we were elected with a very clear mandate to restore the province’s finances to balance within this term. I think Albertans were right to give us that mandate. We cannot achieve that mandate by pretending that 50 per cent of expenditures on wages, salaries, and benefits are somehow immaterial to the fiscal health of the province. You know, I suppose we can infer where the NDP would go with this, which would be: take the wage openers and just throw a dart at the wall and see where it lands. It’s that kind of fiscal mismanagement which took us to nearly a \$60 billion debt.

With that, I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 24, agreed to on June 19, 2019, I must now put every question necessary for the disposal of Bill 9 at third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:53 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Loyola
Carson	Deol	Phillips
Ceci	Goehring	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Reid
Dreeshen	Issik	Rowswell
Ellis	Jones	Sawhney

Fir	Kenney	Sigurdson, R.J.	Glasgo	Long	Stephan
Getson	Loewen	Singh	Glubish	McIver	Walker
Glasgo	Long	Stephan	Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Wilson
Glubish	McIver	Walker	Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao
Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Wilson	Horner	Orr	
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao			
Horner	Orr				

Totals: For – 9 Against – 29

[Motion on amendment REC1 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance has moved third reading of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:58 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Reid
Dreeshen	Issik	Rowswell
Ellis	Jones	Sawhney
Fir	Kenney	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Loewen	Singh

7:00

Against the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Loyola
Carson	Deol	Phillips
Ceci	Goehring	Shepherd

Totals: For – 29 Against – 9

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you Mr. Speaker. First of all, just before I move my motion, I want to thank you for all your hard work this evening, through you to your team, but also to all the officials, the Sergeant-at-Arms and all of his staff. I certainly think I speak for all members of the House that we appreciate all that hard work.

To all hon. members, thank you for a good night's work, lots of progress. With that, I will move to adjourn the House until today at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 7:02 a.m.]

Table of Contents

Government Motions	
Time Allocation on Bill 9	1003
Division	1004
Time Allocation on Bill 9	1060
Division	1062
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 9 Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act	1004
Division	1045
Third Reading	1046
Bill 9 Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act	1046, 1062
Division	1075
Division	1076

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