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The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, October 9, 2019

Day 25

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning, everyone.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. May Your kingdom come, and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 14

Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

[Adjourned debate October 8: Mrs. Savage]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

Before I get into my remarks, I would like to first take this opportunity to thank you, Madam Speaker, your office, and this entire Legislature, from whom a beautiful arrangement of flowers was delivered to my house after my son Ulysses was born, on July 30. Thank you. Now, if you all knew me well, you would have pitched in and bought me a sports car, but my wife and I were genuinely touched by this gesture. Two months later, my son continues to grow at a frightening pace. He is his daddy's boy.

But back to Bill 14. A boiling pit: many of you may not know what this is. By name it may sound fairly self-explanatory, but in the Blackfoot culture it was a means of survival. A boiling pit was a way of cooking where a round hole was dug into the earth. Once the hole was complete, a piece of rawhide was placed into the hole and then filled with water. A fire was then lit nearby, and a number of stones were placed in the fire until they became red hot. When the stones were hot enough, they were placed in the water, which would then raise the temperature to a boiling point, suitable for cooking. In some cases a skin bag filled with meat and vegetables was placed into the boiling pit to make a rich, delicious soup. Madam Speaker, if you think about this for a moment in modern terms, it doesn't seem all that impressive. You grab a shovel, you dig a hole, lay a tarp in it, grab a lighter and some wood, make a fire, throw some rocks in there, and Bob's your uncle. But before contact, boiling pits were a means of survival and took all day to execute.

This was one of the many things I learned while I visited the Blackfoot Crossing historical park in Siksika on September 23 with the Premier, the minister, chiefs from the Blackfoot Confederacy, and a gaggle of other ministers and MLAs for the historic signing of the protocol agreement between Alberta and the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Now, the boiling pit was nothing short of inventive, Madam Speaker, historical proof of the industrious and creative culture that has existed among the first inhabitants of this very land for generations. When the Europeans first began to trade in North America, their goods made their way through the Plains to other tribes, most notably guns, ammunition, knives, tools, household utensils, and, of course, pots, which rendered the boiling pits almost obsolete. Although boiling pits became a thing of the past, the same innovative spirit remains ever present today though predominantly dormant from lack of opportunity, something this government intends to change with this piece of legislation, Bill 14.

Since the start of the term our government has made consultations and partnerships with indigenous groups across Alberta a priority. We listened to nearly 200 leaders, stakeholders, and community members talk about what issues they face. This was done over the course of eight sessions, and we will continue to make an effort to improve their lives by giving them agency in economic development. This bill is a crucial step towards reconciliation with indigenous communities in our province, communities that have been mistreated and overlooked for far too long, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, a lot of the issues facing Alberta's indigenous communities are within federal jurisdiction, and we must ensure that we do not duplicate the work being done by our federal partners. But we must also make sure that we are working collaboratively with them. This bill is not without precedent. As a prime example, we'll look at the federal government's increase in the number of opportunities available to indigenous people in our province.

For example, the Indian Act was intended to protect indigenous holders. However, the act also placed ownership of the land with the Crown, which placed limitations on residents' obtaining financing. According to the Indian Act, section 89(1), reserve lands may not be seized legally, nor is the personal property of the band or band member living on reserve "subject to charge, pledge, mortgage, attachment, levy, seizure, distress or execution in favour or at the instance of any person other than an Indian or a band." Such provisions created a barrier for on-reserve projects such as home development, construction, or renovation. In response, programs and loans for residents on-reserve were guaranteed by the federal government to help assist in such projects.

Furthermore, southern Alberta is a vast landscape of rolling plains, a large part of which is grazing leases. These leases are parcels of Crown land, owned by the government, that are rented to cow-calf producers at a reduced rate so new ranchers can afford to buy and raise cattle as they build their legacy and secure their place in one of Alberta's most vital industries, agriculture.

Similar to on-reserve home renovations, the limitations placed on indigenous groups limit their ability to realize their economic potential in today's competitive resource market. Bill 14 aims to knock down some of these barriers and commits our government to being a partner in building economic and social well-being and provides the tools needed for indigenous communities to invest in our natural resource sector. With these investments they can achieve a stable revenue stream for their communities that can be used to invest in vital infrastructure such as education and health care.

My constituency of Cardston-Siksika is home to two of the largest landmass reserves in Canada. Both face social challenges, yet they work hard to make an effort to improve their communities. The Siksika Nation administers locally run health and wellness facilities and is considered a leader for First Nations in Alberta for services, partnerships, and working directly with the federal government. Social programs aim to improve and promote Siksika quality of life through accountable and efficient delivery that is

community based and caters to the needs of Siksika Nation members.

The Old Sun Community College is also accredited and in 2018 had its first graduating class for the indigenous business administration management diploma. The world-renowned Blackfoot Crossing historical park, which we visited not so long ago, was built for the promotion and preservation of the Siksika Nation's people, language, culture, traditions and is host to thousands of tourists each year and employs numerous members.

Siksika Resource Developments and group of companies are committed to establishing long-term prosperity for Siksika Nation by maximizing revenues generated from the management and development of renewable and nonrenewable resources and by providing Siksika Nation shareholders with a viable return on future investments.

Siksika Nation is also a 50-50 ownership partner of world-class hotels and a conference centre within the city of Calgary and right here in Edmonton. Their \$54 million investment gave them the opportunity to own the Westin Calgary Airport, Element Edmonton West by Westin, and Four Points by Sheraton Edmonton West.

9:10

Many Siksika Nation members thrive in various capacities. There are cow-calf operations, farmers, truckers, and members who operate small businesses on the reserve. By way of example, Darryl McDonald and Mona Royal are the owners and operators of Boy Chief Trading Post, a one hundred per cent First Nation owned business that has been situated in the southwest corner of the Siksika First Nation since it opened, in December 2002. As their business grows, so does the opportunity it has given to them and their family. They now design and produce woolen mill blankets that are of high quality and affordable compared to their competitors. With over 30 years of business experience, Darryl and Mona give back to Siksika. They share their business administration, financial, and management expertise with youth, inspiring the next generation of Siksika entrepreneurs.

The Blood Tribe is also giving youth the opportunity to explore careers in entrepreneurship and giving them the tools and an early start to learn some tricks of the trade. Blood Tribe economic development partners offer business plan review and revising for those who apply for small-business grants. They take the time to give their members a fighting chance, Madam Speaker, when it comes to operating their own businesses, something that is missed for those pursuing entrepreneurship off-reserve. From the financial management boot camps to presentations on emerging technologies, they believe they hold the power to change their circumstances in the wake of hardships that come with living on-reserve.

Our government made sure that Siksika, the Blood Tribe along with other indigenous groups in Alberta were full partners in prosperity. The indigenous opportunities corporation also gives our indigenous Albertans access to sustainable development while staying true to their values as protectors of the land. It will give them a seat at the table to invest in TMX and other oil and gas ventures as well as to explore their own interests in unique resource development projects.

The wind and solar resources over the Blood Tribe are similarly attractive to the renewable energy industry, and it's time they participated actively in their own development. The Blood Tribe partnered with the EDF Renewables on a 200-megawatt Cypress wind project and is based in Cypress county in southern Alberta. They look to double the project by pursuing another wind farm with roughly the same size.

But not all indigenous communities have been able to secure the capital needed for these investments. There are significant barriers for some indigenous communities, but with the help of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, or AIOC, indigenous communities will have access to \$1 billion in loan guarantees. These loans support indigenous co-ownership and financial participation in major resource development. For years indigenous communities have said that they want to be at the table, and the formation of the AIOC will finally give them a seat that they deserve.

We are going to abandon symbolic gestures and develop real strategies to lift our indigenous brothers and sisters to new heights of prosperity. They will be able to invest in the natural resource sector that has provided and will continue to provide for all Albertans. It will allow our indigenous communities to invest in protecting their language and culture while also giving them opportunities to invest in serving their communities as needed. To the indigenous communities around the province: you asked for this. It is my hope that Bill 14 is proof that we heard you and we continue to hear you now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I guess I enjoyed some of the background information that the member presented about First Nations and their history and how they operated, you know, hundreds and thousands of years ago in this area. I was just wondering if he could maybe expand on that a little bit as far as how that relates to how things are going present day and, of course, how this bill itself will represent some of the ambitions and dreams that First Nations people have in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I have always been amazed, as I have developed relationships with the two indigenous communities in my constituency, the Kainai and the Siksika reserves, by how industrious they are and the ideas that they have. When I first met with the Siksika chief and council during the campaign, they talked to me about opportunities that they have in mind that they would like to see the government help them partner with. They also spoke, as I mentioned in my speech, about some of the investments the community has already made in terms of hotels and conference centres. It's that spirit. It's that entrepreneurial spirit that has been a part of their culture since time immemorial. It's something that I've learned as I build these relationships, and I'm excited to continue to work with these communities and learn about their culture and their history.

As we visited the Blackfoot Crossing historical park, I was just amazed by this site. I really do encourage everyone, if you have time, to go down there. It's a little off the beaten path, but this place is just chock full of historical artifacts and information about the Blackfoot people and their history. There's so much to learn from them and realize that long before contact there were people in Alberta who were thriving and had a wonderful way of living. They certainly made the most of the circumstances that they had. I think the boiling pit was just one example of that, and that spirit continues to live on with them and their culture. It's one I love to learn more about and will continue to learn about. I thank the member for asking that question.

To the members of the indigenous communities in Cardston-Siksika I do want to say thank you for all that they've taught me to this point, and I'm excited to keep working with them moving forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Glasgow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Bill 14 is such an important piece of legislation. I'm so proud that our government has brought it forward, but I'm also very proud of the minister that brought this forward. He has made a sincere and concerted effort for reconciliation here in Alberta, and I think it's really obvious just how he has shown that through his actions in attending various events and hosting events and having meetings with indigenous people, just showing them that they are partners in prosperity. I just wanted to start off today by acknowledging just how important this work is that the minister is doing and how it touches me as a new member to see members in our Executive Council making such an effort to work with these people.

As we know, Bill 14 maintains critical election promises that we made during this election to bring back jobs, revitalize the economy, and get our natural resource projects built. It also aligns with our government's commitment to reconciliation with indigenous peoples here in Alberta. Our Premier and my government colleagues have acknowledged the shortcomings and wrongs that indigenous peoples have faced for generations. We realize that we need to work hard to build a trusting, lasting relationship between indigenous communities and our government, but reconciliation requires action, action like bringing forward this important piece of legislation. Bill 14 will fulfill our platform commitments through creating the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. This corporation will allocate \$1 billion of loan guarantees to indigenous groups looking to partake in natural resource development projects.

In 2016 there were over 120,000 First Nations people and over 97,000 Métis people living in Alberta. In 2016 the median age of indigenous people in Alberta was 25 compared to Alberta's median age of 42. That discrepancy is due to a multitude of factors: the mental health crisis, addiction, suicide, lack of education, poor outcomes and health, all of which are exacerbated by poverty.

Thirteen per cent of Canada's total indigenous population live right here in Alberta, and there are 48 First Nations. Now, can you imagine the potential that we could unlock, the prosperity that could be generated if we empowered those communities to develop their resources and pursue ownership stakes in various resource projects? It could be a game changer.

Throughout history indigenous communities, particularly First Nations, have received compensation for allowing resource developments or a pipeline to go through their lands. It's usually a lump sum that is paid out over a set number of years. But after the money has been allocated and spent, then what do these communities do?

Now, we know that Justin Trudeau bought the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, and there's no doubt about that, but many indigenous groups are now saying that they want an equity stake in that pipeline. Before the pipeline was bought out, there were 43 mutual benefit agreements signed with First Nations totalling roughly \$400 million. On average that's less than \$10 million per community. When you're trying to address systemic issues and make life better for an entire community, that money can only go

so far. Equity and ownership would give these communities the opportunity to reap benefits for years and generations to come.

9:20

That's why the indigenous-backed project reconciliation has submitted a bid to purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline. It's why over 35 First Nations have stepped up to propose the indigenous-owned Eagle Spirit pipeline. It's why the Fort McKay and Mikisew Cree bands have invested over \$545 million to buy almost half the shares in one of Suncor's storage facilities. The benefits that will result from indigenous ownership of natural resources won't just be felt in their communities but will have positive effects across Alberta.

Look. I'm from an oil and gas family. My dad has helped and maintains pipelines all across this province. But with tough economic conditions, that have been exacerbated by federal policies as well as the former provincial government, I've seen the impact of these policies in my community. Restaurants, hotels, and other small businesses have had to cut staff or close down completely. This has implications for workers in my riding and across the province, including the thousands of indigenous people who work in Alberta's energy sector.

I started by talking about reconciliation. This weekend I was honoured to go to an event on behalf of the minister of status of women and multiculturalism. It was an event for the Girl Guides of Canada. You're probably saying: how the heck does this relate to Bill 14? I'll get there. They started off the event with a land acknowledgement, but it wasn't just a couple of words and some well-meaning politician saying something. It was a real reconciliation action, I thought, that was taken. This young woman, a librarian in Calgary, came up and gave this land acknowledgement. She and her daughter actually gave two different kinds. They gave a children's version and they gave an adult version, I guess. The children's version had actions. It was heartfelt. It was beautiful. There was almost like a little song that went with it. I wish I knew it because it was fantastic.

The woman who was giving the presentation gave an explanation of why land acknowledgments are so important and why reconciliation is so important to her and her community. At the end of the day the biggest takeaway from that was that she said that there needs to be action. There needs to be something motivating those words that you're saying when you begin a speech or an announcement, and I think that this Bill 14 is a step towards real reconciliation and real partners in prosperity for our indigenous people.

In closing, I think that this is a meaningful, forward-thinking piece of legislation that will not only bring prosperity to indigenous communities across this province, but it will set an example for the rest of Canada of what economic reconciliation looks like.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for that lovely speech. One thing that the member said really took my attention. You mentioned different projects, talking about Trans Mountain, particularly Eagle Spirit. Eagle Spirit as a project is one of the most forward-thinking that we have seen in this province for a long time. The way that it uses private dollars coming from First Nation communities and individuals and interests so that they can move forward their interests as a community is fascinating.

I was speaking to the director and CEO just yesterday at an event that was held at the Legislature before the bill was read aloud yesterday and introduced. He spoke particularly of the need for us to make sure that we have access to markets outside of America for our oil and gas because it will benefit the First Nation communities of northern and all across Alberta more than any other project could. It was hands-down the single most important. This isn't just something being asked by average Albertans in southern Alberta or folks in office towers in Calgary who work in the industry.

This is every single community in the province, every single demographic, particularly those very proud First Nation communities that work on that land, have lived off the land, and found that balance between a growing economy and a sheltered ecology at the same time. They are the ones that have the best experience in threading that needle and walking that line to make sure that we have a province that is prosperous and one that is protected, with the highest standards of environmental labour and human rights. This is why I'm so excited about what the member said when speaking about Eagle Spirit. It is a fascinating project.

If we look at the other projects around, even in my own constituency we can see First Nation communities partnering with mills, looking for equity shares in the mills themselves in the forestry industry. They understand that a healthy forest, one that is harvested regularly, actually stores more carbon than if you let it grow to old age and is more susceptible to bugs, infestation, more susceptible to forest fires, as we saw in my constituency to a devastating effect.

It is the care of the forest that drives these First Nation communities to these projects, first and foremost, and they're the ones urging the industry along to have it done responsibly. There's actually an economic and environmental interest in having First Nation communities partner with us because they're often the ones with the most insight and the most interest and the most experience and knowledge in making sure that these projects are done in an environmental manner. Rather than trying to force it down Albertans' throats in ways where it's all economic pain and no environmental gain, as we saw in the previous government, what we'll have instead is a partnership with First Nations, who care deeply for the land, and that partnership will drive economic and environmental protection in a way that is not done in some forced or fabricated way but is organic and is done from the grassroots up, from those constituents that live there most, with the First Nation peoples.

That's why this is such an important piece of legislation. Its effects are not just economic. This is what you're going to see as a theme through all of these different speeches, and we saw it today with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. This is a social policy. It is an uplifting policy, not just economically. It's uplifting to our environment. It's uplifting to our entire province as a whole. It's for that reason that I'm so very proud to be standing with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat in support of this bill. We are not the only ones doing it. What we stand for here, we have thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Albertans standing behind us all the time when we make these arguments in this House. It's for that reason that we must be so forceful in defending this kind of legislation when it comes up and touting all of its benefits and all of its different facets of how it benefits Alberta. We cannot stay restrained to just that narrow scope of economics. When we end up doing that, we end up failing Albertans. We are here to serve them and our First Nation communities.

That is why I was so proud to stand with the chiefs yesterday when this was announced. Speaking to Grand Chief Arthur Noskey of Treaty 8, which is where most of my constituency lies and where much of Eagle Spirit goes through, he also is a big fan of the project.

He sees it as something that his constituents, the people that he represents as grand chief, benefit from not just abstractly but directly with jobs in that industry.

I couldn't be more proud to stand with these First Nation chiefs, to stand here with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, with the Minister of Indigenous Relations, with the Premier, and all of our colleagues. We see that there are multifaceted benefits for all of Alberta because, like my good friend the chief from Beaver Nation said to me, when First Nations are strong and prosper, the province is strong and prosperous. That's the heart of what this is about.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There are five seconds left under 29(2)(a), so I think it's safe to ask for the next speaker. Is anyone wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Good. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise in this Chamber and speak on a bill that I'm very proud to support, Bill 14. As the members of this Chamber know, this bill will create the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. This bill will ensure that First Nations groups have access to \$1 billion in loans and loan guarantees over the next four years in order to start their own resource projects.

This corporation is the first of its kind and a landmark in this government's commitment to empower indigenous and Métis groups to help meet their goals. Not only is this initiative the first of its kind in Alberta, but it is the only organization of its kind in all of Canada. The United Conservative Party, the UCP, recognizes that it is beyond time to move past shallow gestures and empty words in order to help our First Nations communities. This government knows that our indigenous communities can benefit from developing our natural resources in a responsible manner, and when our indigenous communities prosper, all Albertans prosper.

This initiative bridges the gap in historical investor disinterest in indigenous communities by allowing our First Nations people to directly access funds, to be proactive in making their lives and the lives of their communities better. This will allow our indigenous communities to attain a sense of control and value. This is a crucial aspect in helping our First Nations people to a better economic future. It is not only our fiscal responsibility to help indigenous Albertans, but it's also our moral duty to help them towards self-determination.

9:30

I reflect on my previous four years as MLA and the opportunity I had to serve the community of Morinville. The chamber of commerce there has partnered with the Alexander First Nation group in their business awards – and it's an excellent partnership – to help identify the indigenous entrepreneurs within the Alexander First Nation and to give them recognition for their work as individuals and as groups, to help them understand and get a sense of pride in the work that they do.

I'm reading from the *St. Albert Gazette*, where it identified the three awards and the three recipients of the awards that were at the Morinville chamber of commerce gala. The first award was given to Gutta Muzik. He's an entertainer, Lawrence Paul.

When... [he] heard his name announced for the Artisans Recognition award, he said he was in "disbelief."

"I didn't see this coming at all," he said.

"I know that there are many businesses in the Morinville area that are outstanding – for us to win, I felt really proud of our accomplishments."

This is the first time Paul has been nominated for the chamber award. Gutta Muzik began in 2008 when the musician

decided to get into the hip-hop scene. He said that at the time a few of his friends at Alexander First Nation decided to join the music group.

When he announced the news to his band mates, he said they were proud.

This is part of the recognition of the work that individuals can do and how it can give them a sense of individual pride and self-respect. We need to help and partner with them to encourage them and find ways that they can further along in their entrepreneurial achievements.

There were two other awards given that night – and these awards were given to a couple of young men – the spirit of business awards: Astikasa Metal Works and Pism Contracting. Both of these individuals, fairly young men relative to me, I guess, you know, in their 30s, 40s, have their own metal-working businesses. In conversations with them and with the leadership of the Alexander First Nation it became very evident to me that they exist in a world with a few extra challenges that many of us don't experience, where their access to financing was definitely inhibited and a hurdle that needs to be addressed so that they can find the opportunities that the rest of us in Alberta are able to find also. It's those two things, the ownership of business and the pride that that brings for these individuals and to overcome hurdles, that Bill 14 is hoping to address.

This Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation was formed after careful deliberation with 190 different people and groups, including indigenous leaders and business leaders – a few of these groups include ATCO, EPCOR, Syncrude, Suncor, Eagle Spirit Energy, Project Reconciliation, Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and the First Nations Major Projects Coalition; of course, this is a small snapshot of the total participation to form this revolutionary organization – and positions Alberta to be a major leader in providing support and financial stability for indigenous groups in Canada.

The Fort McKay Nation is an excellent example of the potential benefit a project like this could have for indigenous communities across this province. Today, Madam Speaker, the Fort McKay Nation is heavily involved in oil development, but this was not always the case. Over many years the people of the Fort McKay Nation have worked at their resource development and are now no longer dependent upon the federal government for support. In fact, the Fort McKay Nation has done so well that only 5 per cent of their revenues have come from federal transfers, and its residents' average after-tax income is even higher than that of other Albertans. To put this in perspective for you, the average after-tax income for Fort McKay residents was \$73,571 compared to the average in Alberta, which was at \$50,683, and the average in Canada, at \$38,977. This is an outstanding accomplishment for the Fort McKay Nation.

The end result is an indigenous community that is full of pride and extremely economically successful after acquiring, partnered with another nation, majority ownership of oil infrastructure on its territory, which is worth around half a billion dollars. All of Fort McKay's success was the result of their own hard work beginning in 1983. But imagine if they'd had access to the funding proposed by Bill 14. They could have potentially jump-started their progress, and they could have been even further ahead than they are now. This initiative has the potential to benefit a vast number of Albertan indigenous communities by giving them back the power they need to develop their own lands and reach for their own economic success and all the freedoms that come with that success. Just as Fort McKay has done, we must address and seek to right the wrongs and failures of previous governments, to recognize that our indigenous and Métis communities are more than capable of

developing and monetizing their own resources for their own benefit.

It is a shame that the previous NDP government did not see the same potential in our indigenous peoples that this UCP government does. In 2016 Eriel Deranger, communications manager of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, said this regarding the desire for comanagement of resource development: comanagement is not asking for everything; it's asking to be partners; our ancestors signed our treaty agreements believing that we were signing nation-to-nation agreements to be given equal say in the development of our lands and territories. She also went on to say, about the previous NDP government, that there has been no public indication that conversations of this nature are on the radar.

To contrast Ms Deranger's statements, this year Herb Lehr, president of the Metis Settlements General Council, said that settlements want to develop oil and resources but lack funds and that this new proposed bill is, and I quote: perfect for us. Those are the words of Herb Lehr, president of the Metis Settlements General Council. Well, Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that Bill 14 evidently seems to be a step in the right direction for indigenous resource development relationships and just one more way that this UCP government is addressing the failures of the previous government.

Government has the potential to be a messy, bureaucratic nightmare, Madam Speaker, and the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation has the potential to come through for our First Nation communities where past governments have failed. By giving control back to our indigenous citizens, we can empower them to realize the changes they want to see in their communities without relying on governments that have failed them in the past. Indigenous communities are tired of talk. They want action, and this bill provides exactly that.

Madam Speaker, I sincerely hope that all of my colleagues here in this Chamber can recognize the value of Bill 14 and the value that it can provide to our indigenous communities. It has the potential to shape their future for the better and the potential to shape all First Nations peoples to allow them to regain some control over their resources and their future. I plan to fully support this bill and mark it down as yet another promise made, promise kept.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

9:40

Member Irwin: Thank you. While I appreciate the member's comments and I appreciated the story – he talked about some of the folks who are very much thriving in his riding – I'm quite disturbed by his comments about our government's record. While I was not a member elected in our previous government, I'm so proud of the work that our government did to build relationships with indigenous folks and to really move towards reconciliation.

I'm so proud of our former Minister of Indigenous Relations. I have the honour of having a significant urban indigenous population in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, so I've been at many, many events over the years, including the stolen sisters, sisters in spirit marches and vigils that have happened for the last number of years. I was just at it on Friday. In fact, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was there as well, and you could see the relationships that he's formed with so many members from the community. Again, I'm just appalled by that because I've seen the relationship-building that he's done, that our members have put in, and it's something we can be quite proud of. You know, we also developed a climate leadership plan that included indigenous

communities as partners, and I just think there's a lot to be proud of there, so let's not rewrite history.

And I just want to make a note, because this is something that a lot of folks from the various indigenous communities have pointed out. You know, this government is talking about giving control back and talking about making – some of the language that's been used today is “independence” and whatnot. One way we can move towards that is to stop using paternalistic language. So I would just like to point out to some of the members who have already spoken to try to avoid saying “our indigenous peoples,” “our indigenous communities,” and even “Canada's indigenous communities.” Those aren't my words; those are the words of a number of indigenous folks. Avoiding “indigenous Canadians”: you can talk about indigenous peoples in Canada, but that possessive, that ownership, is paternalistic, colonial language, and I would urge the members to step away from that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to address the comments made by the previous member. She's appalled by the comments made, but the comments made in my speech were directly from members of the indigenous community. I repeat. Eriel Deranger, communications manager of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation: comanagement is not asking for everything; it's asking to be partners. The indigenous communities are looking to be partners in the ability for self-determination as they move forward in developing their communities, bringing themselves into a position of pride in their community, in the work that they are doing. She also calls “appalling” the comments from Herb Lehr, president of the Metis Settlements General Council, who said, and I quote from Herb Lehr: this is perfect for us; Bill 14 is perfect for us.

These are the types of things that the indigenous groups have come to us with, concerns from previous governments that seem to be speaking words without following up with actions that help them to move from a place of dependence to a place of self-determination and a future, that they can recognize themselves, that brings them a sense of pride in their abilities to fulfill their dreams.

The opportunities that this bill has and will have for the indigenous communities are huge, and I believe it's just a start. It's a small start in a direction that will help us, working in a spirit of reconciliation, to have the ability to become partners together in future development of natural resources and in future development of these communities.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley. Have you not already spoken to this in second reading?

Mr. Loewen: No.

The Deputy Speaker: No? Okay. Please proceed.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes. I'm honoured to speak today on Bill 14, this very important bill. I think that when I look at Bill 14 and I see what it does, I see the effects that Bill 14 will have for not only this generation but coming generations. I think what we see is this continued commitment that we have as a government and a commitment that we made to Albertans in our campaign to the economy, to jobs, and to bringing back investment to Alberta and growing our economy. I think,

when we look at these things, that these are so important to the overall well-being of Albertans and, of course, the services that the government provides to Albertans. Again, when I look at Bill 14, I just see so much future and so much opportunity for not only First Nations but for Albertans in general.

Now, the minister in charge here of indigenous affairs has worked so hard to date. He's been travelling Alberta. He's been visiting with First Nations. I understand he's visited, I think, over two-thirds of the First Nations in Alberta, and I think that's a great credit to him and to his work and what he has been doing with not only Bill 14 but building relations between government and First Nations in Alberta. Of course, he's even spent time in Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, which is the closest First Nation to where I live, so they're my neighbours, my friends, the people I see regularly. It was great to have him in that community showing his concern and listening to their concerns.

Now, of course, myself and Central Peace-Notley have a few First Nations groups. I've met with them. Just to kind of go through it a little bit, Duncan's First Nation, which is in the Fairview area: when I met with them, I know a lot of their concerns were over economic activity and trying to grow economic activity in their community. Obviously, they want to see things improve for their people.

Again, Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, which, like I mentioned, is the closest to me – I live just outside of Valleyview, and they live on the west side of Valleyview there. Obviously, I've spent some time with Chief Goodswimmer and many of the council members over the last six months and actually over the last four years, really. When I talked to them and when I listened to them, I know they're looking to improve the well-being of their band members, too, and to improve things in their band and their band land and, of course, within their band members and the economy within their community.

With Sturgeon Lake, of course, I attend their powwow every year, and it's a great event. It's great to see the pride they have in their traditional activities. I attend their round dances, too, when I have a chance. It's always great to be there for them, too, and to see the community get together, young and old alike, with the round dances. In fact, at one round dance I actually won a hand drum. That's one of my prized possessions. It sits prominently in my home, and I love to see that in my home, too. I think it's great, that tradition that is being continued to this day.

The other First Nation in my constituency is Alexander First Nation. They have some land just south of Fox Creek. Just recently they brought many business and industry leaders together because they want to do a development there. They want to develop that land, they want to bring business in there, and they want to have an opportunity to grow the economic benefit of that land. That land sits right on highway 43. Of course, it's a main traffic corridor to northwestern Alberta and to the Peace Country. They want to develop there. They want to be able to lease property to different companies. There's a lot of oil field activity and gas, of course, in that area. They want to develop that land, maybe put up a gas station and maybe even have some residences there and then have opportunity for businesses to set up on that land. They also brought elected leaders in the community together at that same time. They had a great presentation there and had it well set up and well organized.

9:50

I did want to mention, too, that the Minister of Infrastructure was there and spoke at that gathering, and they allowed me to speak, too. It was great to have that opportunity and see First Nations that want to develop industry and develop companies within their areas

and have that opportunity to grow the economy. Of course, that kind of growth is not only good for the First Nations, but it's also good for all Albertans.

I think the most important part of this bill – and often I think that when we see bills that have been brought forward in the past by previous governments, we look at the names, and sometimes the names don't represent what the bill actually does, but I think this one is absolutely perfect. It has the word "opportunities" in it, and that's what this is all about. This is about opportunity for First Nations, and it's an opportunity for First Nations to be involved in the economy, be involved in developing the natural resources on their lands. This will help develop those opportunities and help them have that growth that they would like. I think that's what is required. We need to give opportunity to First Nations to grow. Of course, we want to give opportunities to all Albertans, but this bill focuses on our First Nations.

It's about creating jobs and economic benefit. When we look at the First Nations, like I mentioned, when I meet with them, they talk about how they can improve their communities, how they can improve the lives of their members, and this is one of the best ways that we can do that, by giving them this opportunity to have that kind of economic benefit and economic growth.

Of course, First Nations people can't, you know, take a mortgage on their home or anything like that to start a business. They don't have opportunities like that that others do. That's in legislation. I mean, that's the way it is at this point. They can't do that, so we need to have other ways for them to take advantage of the opportunities that others have because they deserve to be able to provide for their families like anyone else. By having these opportunities to develop businesses and companies and develop their natural resources, that's what will help them provide for their families and continue to grow.

Now, of course, First Nations have a lot of natural resources on their lands and on their traditional lands. When we see all these resources that are there for them, I guess you could kind of see that they're within their reach, but they just need that opportunity to be able to reach out and fully benefit from those resources that they have right at their fingertips. This will give that opportunity for them to benefit from these resources that are right there.

Now, you know, we all know how hard it could be to negotiate the bureaucracy and the red tape and the different things that are involved in getting businesses going and to develop resources. Of course, that's one thing our government is focused on, trying to reduce these restrictions, these barriers to developing natural resources and to progressing as a society as we try to go forward and get things done. These barriers are just as hard for First Nations to overcome as they are for the rest of us and maybe even more so. Again, that's one of the things that we are focused on, trying to remove barriers, trying to allow opportunity, allow these things to grow, allow communities to grow.

We have the same challenges, and they have those challenges, too, and we need to be able to work together to bring down those barriers and make sure we have the opportunity we have to grow the economy in Alberta, get investment here. We need that investment to create the jobs. In the past four years we've seen tens of billions of dollars of lost investment opportunity in Alberta, and that's been because of poor government policies. That's why we need to change these government policies. We need to do things like bring in Bill 14, which provides the opportunities for our First Nations people to grow and to continue with their lives.

Now, this is a historic bill. This is the first of its kind not only in Alberta but in Canada, maybe even across the world, where a government has decided: "Okay. Instead of just giving lip service to First Nations people, we need to do something substantial. We

need to do something that'll be a game changer, that'll bring these communities forward and give them the opportunities that they deserve." It's all about giving indigenous people a higher quality of life and giving them the opportunity to grow in their own communities.

Now, we know that the consultation has been far and wide. We know that our minister has travelled across Alberta visiting First Nations from north to south, east to west. He's covered a lot of ground. We know he's consulted with nearly 200 business and indigenous leaders in regard to Bill 14 and how it's going to be implemented and what its effects could be. I think that's a great credit to this government and to the minister as far as being able to work with these people across Alberta, the industry leaders and First Nations, and being able to bring them together and to come up with this Bill 14 to create this opportunity.

Again, this will allow more communities to be able to own and invest in natural resource development. I think that when we look across Alberta, we know that for many of our smaller communities, in particular across rural Alberta, most of their economic opportunities are with natural resources. Of course, by increasing the number of communities that can benefit from these natural resources, that only helps all Albertans and all of Alberta in our growth and our desire to grow our economy, to, you know, balance the budget and get our economy back on track, get the jobs going so that people can have those jobs that they use to support their families.

I think indigenous leaders – I mean, I think what they want is to become true commercial partners in the energy industry and not just view it from the outside and maybe take some periphery jobs or some periphery economic benefit. I think they want to be true partners. They want to have that opportunity that others have to be involved with the resources and the energy industry that happen right there on their lands and on their traditional lands.

I think we've been poor at selling our responsible resource development here in Alberta. I think that's changing, but something that we need to continue to change is to change the narrative on our resource development. We know that we are the most responsible developer of our resources in the world. There's no doubt about that. We know that the best thing we can do for the environment is to produce more of our resources right here in Alberta because we know we have the highest standards right here.

Another thing we know is that our First Nations people, as they develop resources, will do it with equal or more environmental concern than has been done. We know we've been doing great. We know we can improve and we will improve, but I think it's important to know that we are the best now. We'll continue to be better, and we know that as First Nations become involved, that responsible development will only grow and become better. I think that's something that, hopefully, the world can take note of and actually understand how responsible we are in the development of our resources here in Alberta. Like I say, I think having First Nations involved will only help that position that we have as the most responsible developer of natural resources in the world.

Now, these loan guarantees that Bill 14 talks about: they've never been available before. These are new opportunities that First Nations will be able to have going forward.

I think what is important to realize is this government's actions on this file and other files within government: first of all, we consult, we listen, and then we act. Those are, I think, the most important things that we can do as a government: consult, and not just ask people their opinion and then go and do what we want to do anyways; have meaningful consultation, which means that you listen and you take into consideration what people are saying; and then, of course, follow it with action. Consult, listen, action: I think

that's an important take for this government's actions as we've gone forward. We have to remember we're only just a few months into the ...

10:00

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is applicable. The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to ask the Member for Central Peace-Notley to expand on something that really touched me, his deep love of his constituency, of his First Nation communities – I've had some interaction with Duncan's First Nation, for example, in his constituency – and your shared love, if I may go personal here, your shared love of hunting. If there's one way to get a smile off a First Nation person, it's to ask him how hunting is going this year. Every time: crack the biggest grin you're ever going to see. They love the land. If there's any similarity between the member just speaking and First Nation people that is stronger than any other, it's that same response. When you ask him about hunting, you see a big smile happen, and he could talk for hours.

I know that under 29(2)(a) he's only going to have about four minutes and 20 seconds left, but I'm going to ask him to confine his remarks to their shared love of the land and the animals that they hunt on it. If he could expand on that a little bit, I think it's a great opportunity for his constituents to hear that and see that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate the comments. Of course, yes, I have a great love for the outdoors, and that's something that's shared with the First Nations people in my area. When we get together, we can always talk about moose hunting and elk hunting and being out on the land.

You know, I talked about the environment and how responsible resource development is important for the environment. When I look at the environment, of course, I look at the quality of the landscape, the quality of the water. I look at the abundance of wildlife and the diversity of wildlife. In the Peace Country I think we're extra blessed there with having so many species of wildlife and that kind of diversity. I know that the First Nations rely on that wildlife for subsistence, and I know in my travels in the woods and in the backroads and everything I run into them quite often. We're after the same thing. Of course, we'd like to fill the freezer and have that opportunity to eat some good Alberta wild game.

Again, I just think it's so important to think about that responsible development and how that affects the landscape. You know, we really want to see those opportunities continue for First Nations not only on the development end of things – of course, that's what this bill focuses on – but also on the environment and protecting the environment and protecting that opportunity that we both have to go out on the landscape and hunt and trap and fish as we do.

Now, we expect that the effects of this bill could be seen as early as spring 2020, and I think we'll be looking forward to that. I know First Nations will be looking forward to that, too. You know, I think that one of the things we need to realize is that with these opportunities for investment and these opportunities that'll come from these projects, the revenue can be used to reinvest in the community, to priorities within the community. When I visit with the First Nations in my community, they all have things they would like to see, and I think that the revenues from these projects could be reinvested to make their priorities possible. We look at things like, say, the Eagle Spirit project and how important that would be to get our resources to market. When we get our resources to

market, Albertans' resources to market, that obviously will include the First Nations resources. That's why it's so important and why it's so frustrating to see people opposing things like pipelines. This isn't just that, you know, they could say: well, we don't care about Alberta. But when they're saying that, they don't care about First Nations people and their ability to get their products to market, too.

I think that's what's shameful about the people that are opposing pipelines. We know pipelines are the safest, the most economic way to transport our oil to market. I think that, again, we want to give First Nations the opportunity to be true partners in resource development, we want to make sure that people understand how important it is to have responsible development and the opportunity for First Nations to improve their communities, and we know that this will help all Albertans. Again, as we look forward down the road, when we see these barriers coming up with pipeline protests, we hope that this will stop and that people will realize that there are benefits to all Albertans with this.

Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading on Bill 14? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 14, Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I think I want to start by saying that we will be supporting this bill and any effort towards reconciliation. In fact, as my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said, we should avoid using that kind of language, that we are giving them opportunities. In fact, indigenous people have a right to be part of the economic, social, and cultural life of the province. They were here before any of us. We do know that for a number of reasons they were left behind, and we can, I guess, see that from their economic participation. We can see that from their high school completion rates, their school graduation rates. We can see that from the number of children, you know, in our system. We can see that in their overrepresentation in our justice system. We can see that from the living conditions, housing conditions on the reserve, the water situation on the reserve and, in general, in their participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of this province.

Certainly, it's a step in the right direction, but there is a lot more work that needs to be done. I think we will speak to the bill and its provisions in detail in Committee of the Whole, but generally speaking, when I was looking at it, it wasn't clear whether this bill will do anything other than just letting them borrow or facilitating their borrowing and, when I was looking at the board composition, whether a majority of these members will be from indigenous communities. I think it was indicated that cash was coming from cancelling of oil-by-rail contracts.

I think I can speak to quite a bit of that because prior to becoming a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I was also practising with an indigenous boutique law firm, which was focusing on Indian residential schools, treaty land claims, indigenous rights. I do not want to go into the history of all that, but I will suggest this much, that based on my own experience, based on my interactions with my different clients, various bands, I know that whatever we do, we need to do it in consultation with the indigenous communities and in a respectful manner. People are better judges of their problems, and just having a corporation set up may not address many of the issues that our indigenous communities are facing.

I heard earlier from the member opposite that they were attacking the record of the previous government. One, I think reconciliation shouldn't be a partisan issue. When we were in government, we took a number of steps to further that reconciliation, to further that

process. Yes, we haven't fixed everything, but we did things that were meaningful to the indigenous communities. For instance, we were the first government who took steps to implement the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We signed framework agreements with many treaty organizations, many First Nations. In fact, the former minister and my colleague, the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford, was the first minister this province ever had who visited all 48 First Nations. That goes to show that we were putting in time and effort to work with these communities.

10:10

Also, we were the first government who took steps towards creating a meaningful apology for '60s scoop survivors, and we worked with indigenous communities and organizations advocating for that apology for a long time. We were the government who took steps to implement Jordan's principle, which First Nations have been calling for for decades. We were the government who took steps to facilitate training of 27,000 public service employees about the indigenous people. As my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford yesterday mentioned, on the indigenous ministry's website there was a document called Alberta's Path to Reconciliation that disappeared over the summer, which actually reflected all these initiatives that we were doing to recognize the history and contribution of indigenous communities, including the history of residential schools and the '60s scoop. I think we took steps in providing them with or making sure that indigenous communities have clean water, and we made historical investment in that area. Also, we were funding women's shelters. We were funding native friendship shelters. We were working with them on issues that mattered to them.

Last week, I believe, I was in a town hall in Calgary where a large number of Calgarians came to share their views about the upcoming budget and their issues and concerns in general. There was one young indigenous woman lawyer who was there, and she spoke about a couple of things. She first spoke about the missing and murdered women inquiry. The report has been out for a while now. She indicated that Alberta is the only province which has not done anything in that regard. In fact, when asked in question period yesterday of the Minister of Indigenous Relations whether he supports those recommendations, he didn't commit one way or the other whether he supports those recommendations. That was the case when he was asked prior whether he supported the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and he wasn't sure that he supports those. In fact, when asked whether recognizing treaty lands is necessary for public officials, he commented that that was just a choice, and they, in fact, have abandoned treaty recognition in public speaking and public places. These are the things that do not promote, do not help us with reconciliation, and we need to do better on these fronts as well.

I think, as I was saying, that when the indigenous communities are consulted with, when we work with them, we have seen many communities who have successfully created partnerships and invested large scale in our resource sector as well. For example, Mikisew Cree First Nation and Fort McKay First Nation invested almost half a billion dollars in 2017 for a share in Suncor oil storage out of Fort Mac. Almost 35 per cent, 34 per cent, is owned by Fort McKay and 15 per cent by Mikisew Cree First Nations.

It's my sincere hope that through this corporation we will open up economic opportunities for indigenous people and will facilitate their participation. That has not been the case for a while. We will also work with them on other issues that matter to them.

I think that in this case, sure, it's a good step, but under the indigenous climate leadership plan there was almost \$90 million in investment in various projects all across this province that they

were benefiting from. Now I think that with the cancellation of the climate leadership plan they have been stripped of all of those opportunities, and I guess they are given hope that this corporation will create opportunities. It's my sincere hope that this corporation will.

With that, I think I will be supporting this bill, and we will have further discussion and comments at the committee stage of this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is applicable. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the support and opportunity for input from the hon. member preceding me. I would like to give the member an opportunity to elaborate a little bit on how he believes this Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation has an opportunity to uplift the dignity of the individuals with new work in those communities. For example, in my constituency the Dene Tha', between Meander and Chateh and Bushe reserves, have a very high level of unemployment, and it's been a chronic problem, as you outlined, as many others have in their speeches on the other side of the Chamber. I was wondering if you could elaborate on how your hope and, in my understanding, your support of this bill will bring employment to these individuals. The unemployment is as high as 90 per cent in some of these communities, and if you remove the work that is offered by the band itself, it goes even higher. Any way that you could articulate the way that your hope that this legislation, that you support, will bring work to these communities and bring dignity to those individuals: I'd be very interested in hearing that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Let's take this opportunity to remind all members to speak through the chair.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think, as I mentioned, that there are quite a few details that we still need to learn about and hear from the government side, and I would rather hear from the government how they think this indigenous opportunities corporation will facilitate their objectives, how it will help address unemployment. Certainly, I think that whenever indigenous communities are given opportunities, they have successfully created business ventures, partnerships, and made investment where they have created employment for their community. For instance, employment may not be as high as in Mikisew or Fort McKay First Nations, where they have partnered with Suncor and created wealth and opportunities for their members.

What I can tell you is that that is the case across the province for the most part, that unemployment is way higher than Alberta's average in our indigenous communities, and that was the reason that we were working with indigenous communities on many different issues. For instance, I referenced the indigenous climate leadership plan. Under the climate leadership plan they were provided with the funds, they were provided with the opportunities and almost \$90 million in interest-free grants so that they can work on issues that matter to them. They can work on things that will help them with economic development, that will help them in creating jobs and addressing issues that are facing their communities. For instance, when we were in government, we invested in clean water on-reserve. With that investment, not only comes clean water but comes economic opportunity, comes employment and all those benefits.

10:20

I think that with this corporation there are a number of details that we still need to hear, whether this will be just a loan guarantee kind of corporation or whether government will be actively investing in it, that still needs to be seen, but one thing I can for sure tell you is that instead of giving \$4.5 billion to the wealthiest corporations, had we invested that \$4.5 billion in this corporation, this indigenous opportunities corporation, we would have fixed many things. We would have addressed graduation rates. We would have addressed unemployment issues. We would have addressed clean water. We would have addressed issues they're facing with respect to the justice system. I think that investment, that handout that was given earlier, the \$4.5 billion handout to the wealthiest corporations: we could have given that to this corporation. I'm sure that this corporation would have thrived, created opportunities, would have solved unemployment issues in Dene Tha' and the reserves you were referring to and many other reserves across this province, and Alberta at large would have benefited from that investment.

The Deputy Speaker: We are on second reading of Bill 14. Are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, or AIOC, is an example to me of real partnership and real action. Our government committed to partnering with Alberta's indigenous communities in building economic and social well-being. The AIOC allocates \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support aboriginal co-ownership and financial participation in major resource development. First Nations and indeed all Albertans should fully benefit from the vast resources that lie beneath us.

Before I was elected, I worked in finance as an investment banker. For about 10 years I helped companies and entrepreneurs raise capital for growth or expansion or acquisitions. I think people assume that good projects naturally attract capital, that if a project makes sense on a spreadsheet, someone will fund it, but that simply isn't the case. There are millions of positive net present value projects that are never funded or brought to fruition.

But why does this happen? In general the demand for capital exceeds the supply of capital. Capital providers often review hundreds of opportunities before shortlisting a group for due diligence. After conducting due diligence, very few of these opportunities are funded, sometimes none, yet each of these opportunities can and often does have merit. The perceived difficulty of executing an investment can also turn off investors, or they may lack the in-house expertise required to execute it.

In Alberta, nowhere is the difficulty to access capital more evident to me than with our First Nations. The ability of indigenous groups to provide adequate security to financial lenders has and continues to be a significant barrier in their ability to access capital. The capacity to develop or invest in major resource projects varies widely across indigenous communities.

Alberta finally has a government that understands that when indigenous communities benefit from the responsible development of our natural resources, the entire province benefits. The AIOC will bridge the gap between indigenous groups wanting to be commercial partners in the natural resource sector and will position Alberta as a leader in providing financial capacity and building support for indigenous groups seeking to invest in natural resource development projects. This backstop is important because it will enable and facilitate economic development, which is desperately needed in our province and will prosper our First Nations and, once again, all Albertans.

I also think the AIOC will signal to industry that Alberta is open for business, that Alberta is seeking to develop its resources responsibly, and that our First Nations are partnering with our government and, hopefully, investors and industry to get it done. I don't know about you, but that would encourage me to invest.

To get from our platform to this bill and the proposed AIOC, our government hosted eight engagement sessions from July to August of this year. Nearly 200 people participated in these sessions, providing their input, their concerns, their suggestions, and we listened. Participants included indigenous and business leaders. Corporate participants included industry leaders like Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, EPCOR. Industry associations and coalition representatives from Eagle Spirit Energy, First Nations Major Projects Coalition, and the Western Indigenous Pipeline Group also attended.

I can tell you that while I believe each of our ministers is fully dedicated and invested in their ministries, nowhere are emotional investment and sincerity more apparent than with the Minister of Indigenous Relations. I think that's important because when you genuinely care about something or someone, you will act in their best interests. I emphasize the word "act" because I believe our First Nations have suffered from inaction, not from a lack of words. Words and acknowledgements, while important, do not feed families. They do not build homes or roads or schools or other required infrastructure. They do not clean water.

I'm looking forward to supporting this bill and the action that will follow it, and I would encourage everyone in this Chamber to do so as well. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to second reading on Bill 14? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For far too long reconciliation with Alberta's and Canada's aboriginal communities has been put off and ignored. We have seen politicians at all levels of government pretend to care about the issue but, when push comes to shove, lots of talk and little action. Reconciliation is defined as the act of restoring to friendship or harmony, and that takes time, effort, and will. I am proud of our Premier, our cabinet, and our Minister of Indigenous Relations for the example in leadership they have shown in these efforts. I know first-hand, both from door-knocking in my constituency and meeting with stakeholders in my capacity as MLA for Lethbridge-East, that Alberta's indigenous population wants to see our resources developed. Out of more than 600 First Nations bands in this country, many are strong supporters of this kind of development.

I want to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for coming to Lethbridge to meet with the First Nations leaders during the Friendship Society's AGM. His compassion, clearly evident during his presentation yesterday, was on clear display that day as well. The fact that he has travelled all over this province, not just on some obligatory trip but truly building relationships with First Nations peoples, is a testament to his compassion and care. Thank you to that minister.

The indigenous community in Alberta has been stewards of this land for centuries, and our government understands the necessity of responsible resource development. The bill before the House today allows our valued indigenous communities to be equal partners in resource development so that all Albertans can take advantage of the abundance of resources that this province is so blessed to have. This bill by no means is a government handout. It provides an opportunity for the First Nations groups in this province to help

themselves. It incorporates innovation, captivating new policy that will be utilized across Canada.

While I understand the necessity of responsible development, I also believe it is crucial that we consult and engage with our stakeholders, especially when projects overlap with traditional indigenous territory. This is something that former governments refused to do, instead wanting to lecture, fearmonger communities, whether indigenous or not, on the need to reduce their alleged oversized carbon footprint. Madam Speaker, this country produces well under 2 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and for the GHGs that we do produce, they are the most environmentally and ethically sourced fossil fuels in the world.

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this issue surpasses economic concerns. This is humanitarian – humanitarian – this resource development and opportunity for indigenous partners, benefiting them, especially when these are some of the most vulnerable communities in the province.

The fact of the matter is that the world will continue to produce oil and gas throughout this century. Most projections show global demand for fossil fuels continuing to grow until at least 2050. The federal Liberals have been holding back the potential of this province in developing our resources, all to the detriment of Albertans and only to the benefit of dictatorships and others who have no regard for human rights or the environment.

I am proud to stand here today in this House to discuss this vital issue. It is of crucial importance that we continue to develop the abundance of resources that all Albertans are fortunate to take ownership of. While those that attempt to land-lock our resources and support foreign-funded campaigns with misinformation and deception – our provincial government will always be standing up for hard-working Albertans that produce our resources and the countless Canadians that benefit from our industry.

At the end of the day, the intent of this bill, I believe, is to promote responsible development and environmental stewardship in a way that gives our economy a much-needed boost. I think it is incredibly admirable that the Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations have worked on this bill with the aim of bringing our indigenous partners into the fold.

10:30

In my own constituency this summer I was invited to attend a teepee camp organized and put forward by a local First Nations police officer, Les Vonkman. This was an incredible experience, where we were invited to stand a teepee – set up the poles, wrap it with a canvas – understanding the cultural respect for the land, the forest, the river, and even the poles themselves as they represented life to the people and the nature that we are a part of. We heard from elders and knowledge keepers. We took a hike through the natural resources and the natural land along the river to see the history of their people on the land.

We also participated in a sweat lodge. We heard their prayers. We listened to their songs. We felt the heat of the time in that sweat lodge. It was a spiritual experience for them and for myself as we reached a confluence of not just the Catholic history and their people but also their spiritual beliefs as First Nations people.

This government is standing up for those kinds of communities, for those people and those traditions, and for all Albertans, giving them the support to help them grow, sustain economic prosperity, utilize their natural resources ethically, and, hopefully, set the stage with a policy set forth in Bill 14 for the rest of Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lethbridge-East for his wonderful remarks.

As I've learned and grown from the indigenous communities in this province, there have been a lot of ideas coming to mind, and one of them is respect for the environment, respect for the lands. There is just tremendous respect for the lands that we live on, and I've learned so much from them. Something that I love about this specific bill, Bill 14, the AIOC, is how it actually hopes to give a hand up to indigenous communities in this province. But also I believe this ensures that as they penetrate the natural resource market, we will also see continued respect for the environment, something that some people in this province and this country may think that this government doesn't care about, but I can tell you that we care deeply about it. We do believe that we can grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time.

As I walked through the climate rally that took place in front of this building a couple of days ago with my Support Energy shirt on, insults were hurled at me, but like this government, I remain steadfast in supporting our energy sector and supporting this government in the direction we're taking, particularly with this Bill 14.

I'm hoping that the Member for Lethbridge-East can maybe talk a little bit about his experience working with First Nations, particularly as they respect the environment, some of the lessons he's learned, and also maybe he could talk about how he believes Bill 14 will both ensure that we develop our resources in a responsible way but also protect the environment.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you. Thank you for the question from the Member for Cardston-Siksika.

That experience with the teepee camp really did help teach me about the First Nations connection to the land. It was amazing to leave the rush of the city. Lethbridge being the third-largest city, it's still fairly small. It only took a few minutes to get past rush hour, but even there there's an energy and a busyness that as soon as we got into the reserve and onto the private land of this individual that shared his land with us, you could feel the peace begin to settle.

We parked our cars, we took the time to sit down, and we didn't just rush to work as we settlers often do. They sat down. They did introductions. We took time to learn each other's names, our backgrounds, and hear our stories, where we came from, what we were hoping to learn and engage in, all in the setting of a canopy of trees and wildlife and nature around us with the sound of the river in the background. It was only after that time was taken to be in touch with one another and to be in touch with nature that we began to find the site for setting up a teepee.

Then they took the time – again, they didn't just rush into the work – to explain the significance of the poles, which poles did what, how they stood them up, and that you weren't to walk over the poles because the poles came from trees and they have their own spirit. To step over them was actually a disrespect to the spirit within the poles themselves. So once you set that teepee up, it became like a living place for them, and that's part of their culture. To take that time to learn their perspective, to learn their beliefs, to listen to how they interact with nature and the environment: it becomes far more evident why being environmentally conscious, like Bill 14 would set forward, is so important as we invite the First Nations into those business ventures with us.

It takes time to do that building. It takes time to build those friendships. This didn't happen over the course of an hour or two. We took most of the day as we set up that teepee and learned all about the culture: the smoke flaps at the top, the skirting inside the

teepee, how the wind would come from the outside and not go right into the teepee but up the outside and take the smoke out. Then you build the firepit in the middle so that they can sit there and visit. Many times through that day we sat down again, and they brought in elders to come and speak to us.

I learned that part of our challenge as government, even though the First Nations have chiefs and council, is that their people often are more connected to their elders and their knowledge keepers in their societies. They already see two levels of government within their own peoples and nations. We need to understand that if we're going to work with them in respect, work with them in the development of resources, and work with them to protect their environment, part of getting to know them and work with them is acknowledging the hurts of the past because you cannot change or heal what you don't acknowledge. Taking that time to do that with them and then having the firepits . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 14? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's been a real privilege to sit in here and listen to some of the incredible stories. I know that a humongous amount of what we learn, even just being an elected official, is actually being able to travel around and speak with people and have really significant and incredible conversations with people of various cultures and backgrounds. Some of the really amazing opportunities that we have when you get invited into those spaces. To the point of the Member for Lethbridge-East: it's just such a privilege, isn't it?

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to speak a little bit about some of the experiences that I've had and why this bill is so important. I was recently invited to participate in a sharing circle at an event commemorating the 142nd anniversary of the Treaty 7. It was overwhelming for a lot of different reasons but partially because of the vista where we were, if you can imagine an incredibly beautiful flat space where some of the very first Europeans actually came over the mountains and where the Stoney Nakoda actually met them and brought them over the mountains and settled in this area together because the Stoney Nakoda had such a great ability to raise buffalo. It was actually a relationship that started some of the very first ranches in the province.

Just absolutely incredible vistas are there, but more than that, as you looked out, it dropped down to this turquoise water that was right behind. As you walked up, there are remains of the McDougall family which was the first family that settled out there along with the Stoney Nakoda. There are also all sorts of acknowledgements to teepee circles and various other things that were there because of the relationships that were built building that land and farming that land and living together. When you heard the stories of the settlers and the stories of the First Nations, the First Peoples that were there, and how they collaborated together and worked together and traded together, it was overwhelming the spirit of generosity and the way that things had worked at that time.

There was a fellow there; his name is Tony Snow. He's a descendant of the Treaty 7 signatories, and he's actually studying his father. Snow Sr. was the first ordained indigenous minister of the United church of Alberta. Tony has gone on to bring together that ministry as well as indigenous history and spirit to be able to work alongside his people in reconciliation to help bring folks together but also to be able to work within the church to bring those folks together. He spoke at this site about how it is that we need to work together, and really it's a matter of listening. Respect comes from sitting back and listening, breathing in a person's words,

listening to what they actually mean, and then you break down how it is that we work on that together. That does take time, an immense amount of time, but it's privileged time, especially at a time right now where we're all looking at how it is that we move beyond symbolic gestures.

10:40

They're good starting points. I think all of us acknowledge that that's a very important place to start. But there's a difference between a gesture, and then you go to building the relationship, and then we go to figuring out that we work together to make sure that all of us not only live together but understand each other, have compassion and great respect for each other's cultures. But how do we become prosperous and make sure that those folks have access to everything that we all believe is such a great gift in this province, being our natural resources? We have the best, the very best, resources in the world. Not only that, our stewardship is amongst the best in the world. A lot of that is because, if you look historically at a lot of the larger groups and corporations, they have worked collaboratively with indigenous peoples to understand how it is that we move through those lands.

The interesting thing is that as this piece came together, and speaking very closely with my very dear friend the Minister of Indigenous Relations, we started to find out, and he started to understand as he was going through this process, the amount of respect and really great friendships that had already been built amongst a lot of the groups and with our indigenous peoples. This piece of legislation elevates that. It takes it to the next level, where we actually acknowledge our moral obligation to an incredible group of people who have every right to benefit the same way that the rest of us do. That collaboration, that acknowledgement of that, is way beyond a symbol. It's way beyond a gesture.

This is something that from my perspective is, like I said, one of the biggest privileges that we have being here, that you get to meet people that you would never meet. I often say this. I speak at a lot of schools. Who gets to do this? Not only are you invited to come and meet with people, but you're invited into their homes and their spaces and to take a meal and sometimes to pray or sometimes to acknowledge spirit or the Creator, whatever that is, whatever is important to that person. We are invited into that inner circle to participate. Why? Not because it's symbolic to people but because it's meaningful because they want to share. We want to share. This takes us to a whole other level of acknowledging the need for prosperity.

One of the members in opposition had mentioned that about issues around water and poverty. These have been chronic issues that we have faced. We've heard these cries from our indigenous peoples for such a long, long time, and all governments have failed immensely in being able to make sure that we take care of all of our people in this beautiful country. This is a legitimate act, a step to move forward, to making sure that we don't continue on allowing these things to happen.

In order to change fundamentally how it is that First Nation peoples have money and prosperity from this, we've already seen it. We've talked about Eagle Spirit. We've talked about many, many different nations that are very prosperous and have done phenomenal work on their own because these are self-determining nations. However, there are places where we need to make sure that that prosperity is also elevated so that they can take care of their own people. This is a nation-to-nation discussion, which is significantly different. This is an acknowledgement of the self-determining people and what the needs are of those people because we listen to them and understand what our part is. How do we do this? How do we consult?

When I was reading through the consultations that the minister had done, that he had met with 98 members of various First Nations and First Peoples across the province, that's in itself a very, very interesting thing to understand and know. But if you know anything about this minister, you'll understand that each one of those meetings had a meaningful, loving, and very, very compassionate discussion behind it that not only started the building of a relationship but went further to discuss how it is that we work together in collaboration to create prosperity. That's what this bill is about. An opportunity is something that we fling open the doors and we say: here's what we're going to do to help.

It's wonderful that in the past the governments have given grants and other opportunities and things like that to grow and acknowledge First Peoples and First Nations. Again, we're stepping beyond that. We're looking past helping to build pieces of infrastructure and things like that that are, again, our obligation as a government. This is actually a partnership, a partnership where all of us prosper together. That shows a significant shift in a discussion. This has been needed for such a long time, but beyond that, it incorporates all of the important things about how it is that a self-determining nation can create equity on that nation.

This is another piece of the puzzle. As nice as other things are, it didn't help to create equity and an ability for people to grow their own money, sustainability, and ability to take care of their own people. This is what this bill does. It goes beyond where we have been. We all have major gratitude in this House for what has happened in the past, but we go beyond that a step to understand: what is our responsibility and our obligation towards each other, nation to nation, to create that prosperity so that their children – and the other thing is, too, that if we look at this, that is what we talk about in reconciliation. How do we bridge those gaps? How do we look at using oil and gas or whatever resources we have available to us to bridge the gap in reconciliation? We build relationships. We understand the need for prosperity, for taking care of our children, for our future, how it is that we look at each other, the partnerships that we create, how we evolve, where we've been, and where we're going to.

This bill has the opportunity to say: "This is where we are. This is where we're going. Here is the opportunity, and how can we help you to create that prosperity?" Every single person in this House knows and understands the importance of what it means to look forward and say: well, what's going to happen to my grandchildren? We talk about that all the time, how increased debt and the issues that we have with debt and deficit are mortgaging our children's future. This is about looking at that issue and that problem and solving it collaboratively with an incredible group of people who are unbelievably resilient.

All of us, I think, have had the pleasure of sitting in a First Nations gathering. There were many of us at the spirit sisters gathering in Calgary. What I think most touched me – there were so many things, but what was very profound for me was the ability of these people to stand up and tell their story, as painful as it was, of everything that they had gone through, but we were looking for that path forward. There was a physical sense of understanding where we had failed, what had gone on, but what was the path forward? This has been that cry. This bill is an answer to that. How do we move forward?

There are so many things that I could share with you about the incredible opportunities I've had with our First Nations and First Peoples. The one thing I want to be very clear about is that in our relationship we have to talk about things that are mutually beneficial for all people. That's largely in part what those discussions and what happened when the minister went around the province to travel and to talk with leaders of nations and various

people were about, that mutual benefit and that relationship, but we also wanted to make sure that the bill sets out clear expectations. Again, it's okay to pat yourself on the back for doing some nice things for people. It's a wonderful part of what we all get to do in here. But when you look at mutual benefit and you look at the relationship and clear expectations that are laid out in this bill, we can actually see that path forward.

When we talk about engagement with First Peoples, that's not just sitting down and having the relationship. We need to move beyond that and understand, listen to, and find solutions for how it is that we – what's the next step? Next steps are a very serious piece of what this bill does. It takes fundamental issues of poverty, social issues, isolation, many, many other things and makes sure that not only are we looking at that social piece but that we understand that prosperity and building within those nations will help solve so many of the other problems that all of us have within our nation and within their nation.

10:50

Quite often we hear within those social perspectives about how it is that we enter into that with a competency of understanding that nation. You can't talk about one nation on all nations. This is one point that I wanted to make very clear, too. These are thumbprints. These are unique, individual human beings and different nations, all with different perspectives and politics of their own. To make the assumption – especially with land acknowledgements, I have found in my short time here that it's my responsibility to find an elder at one of these events and actually ask them what they would prefer. Not all elders like to have land acknowledgements and the treaties because the treaties were painful for them. Not all people that are at these events want to be acknowledged in a particular way, so I always ask. Isn't that what we're supposed to do? We're supposed to ask. They are self-determining, independent nations.

You can have all the land acknowledgements that you want – and I firmly believe that that's an important part of what we do – but why don't we ask, especially if an elder is there? That's the elder's prerogative to do that land acknowledgement, not mine, and if they do that, then I will acknowledge based on having spoken to that elder and finding out how they would like me to acknowledge their people because I'm on their land.

This is a shared opportunity. We share the land, we share relationships, we build families together right across this beautiful province and across the nation, and we can build prosperity together.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for your comments on Bill 14. It's great to see the ministers up and speaking to the bill. I have a couple of questions for clarity, and you may not be able to answer them now, maybe during Committee of the Whole or as we move forward through the debate. I was just looking at the definition of indigenous groups in the act. For those following along, page 3, section 3, subsection (1), under the definition it says:

3(1) For greater certainty, for the purposes of this Act, "indigenous groups" means

and then it goes

- (a) Indian bands as defined by the Indian Act . . .
- (b) Metis settlements established by the Metis Settlements Act,
- (c) Metis groups as defined by the regulations,

and then under (d) it says:

- other entities approved by the Minister by order as falling within the mandate of the Corporation, and
- (e) entities that are fully owned by the entities identified in clause ...

I guess my question is that when we're looking at definitions of indigenous groups, that this act is defining, if we could get clarity from the government as to how you would then say that there are other abilities of identifying indigenous groups outside of what would typically be in the Indian Act and the Metis Settlements Act, therefore outside of First Nations communities and Métis people. When I see "other entities," I get a little concerned about how you're starting to define "other entities" and how that goes outside of the typical definition of a First Nations person and a Métis person. My understanding is that this is about supporting indigenous communities, First Nations and Métis people, to be able to have opportunities within corporations. So to have an opportunity for the minister to redefine the definition of what a First Nations person is and what a Métis person is for the guise of falling under a mandate of a corporation – I guess I'm just a little concerned that this is creating maybe a potential loophole to not necessarily have indigenous people represented in these corporations.

Again, I recognize that may not be something you can answer right now. In Committee of the Whole I have no problem bringing it up again. But if you have the opportunity to respond, that would be great.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will answer it a little bit more fully later, but, just to give you some examples, not all bands are recognized. There's nonstatus as well, especially if we are looking at some – there are quite a few people that have lost their status and may be trying to work back into these corporations. We just want to make sure that all of those opportunities – we don't want to miss out on people, especially for women. We have a lot of nonstatus women that have lost humongous opportunities as a result of many issues. We are trying to open those doors as much as possible. That's part of the answer, but we'll get more for you.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members on 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to elaborate on the minister's comments, there are also provisions there so that we can make sure that the groups that are currently doing the business within the First Nation communities that are owned by those communities in part or in whole can participate. My understanding, when I read this act, is that there is no intention to redefine indigenous groups wholly. It is really for the purposes of this act so it can fulfill its mandate and make sure that those guarantees of funds and backing – that's its purpose – can be used by the business groups of the First Nation communities that are owned by those communities. If we didn't have this provision, we'd have a real tough time making sure that they do business because it's through these business corporations that they participate in our economy. So it's of utmost importance, the way that I read it, that we keep these clauses in there and we allow flexibility so that the minister and the board can make what they need happen so that those loan guarantees can be used fruitfully.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. I just wanted to add that in order to gain and garner securities and to leverage those dollars, to the point of that, we have to make sure that the bands who are actually already in businesses with other corporations that may not be First Nations businesses can leverage dollars with securities. That's been a huge barrier to them being able to get equity. That's part of the reason that that's in there.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to Bill 14 in second reading? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This UCP government is proud to be working with indigenous leaders on the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. It's about time that the Alberta government takes concrete steps to improve the well-being of indigenous Albertans and consult with indigenous people on a regular basis. This UCP government will work hand in hand with indigenous groups to restore equity and opportunity to the indigenous Albertans and the thousands of communities they live in. Our UCP government is dedicated to partnering with Alberta's indigenous communities in building economic and social well-being.

The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation allocates \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support aboriginal co-ownership and financial participation in major resource development because it is a moral obligation to help our First Nations benefit from the resources that lie beneath the ground that their ancestors inhabited thousands of years ago. We as a government are looking forward to this partnership. Madam Speaker, let me assure this Chamber and all Albertans that clearing up our balance sheet and partnering with indigenous groups will be a huge step in the right direction for Alberta and essential to the oil and gas industry.

This UCP government was pleased to host eight engagement sessions between July 10 and August 8, with engagement from almost 200 participants. Developing this plan is just the first step in rebuilding a relationship between the government of Alberta and indigenous groups throughout the province. The ability of indigenous groups to provide adequate security to financial lenders is a significant barrier in their ability to access capital and the capacity to develop or invest in major resource projects. It varies widely, greatly across indigenous communities. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will bridge the gap between indigenous groups wanting to be commercial partners in the natural resource sector. This UCP government will work out the challenges between Alberta's energy sector and indigenous stakeholders to ensure everyone benefits from Alberta's energy potential. All stakeholders are being given an equal opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns, and questions. In addition to almost 200 indigenous, business, and financial leaders, corporate participants from major energy groups such as Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, and EPCOR also joined the engagement sessions.

Alberta is a land of opportunity. This UCP government is looking forward to fulfilling that promise and building an Alberta for everyone, including indigenous communities. We are excited to be working with coalition representatives from Eagle Spirit Energy, First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Project Reconciliation, Iron Coalition, Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and Fort McKay Mikisew Cree tank farm project. All of these groups have offered extremely valuable insight during our engagement sessions and will continue to be valued partners in the coming years.

Generating economic growth for indigenous communities gives more opportunity to buy into energy projects that can provide thousands of new, well-paying jobs to indigenous workers. Madam Speaker, this is about developing a safer future for indigenous communities. Engaging indigenous Albertans into our future while limiting intrusive laws and rules and regulations is important to this government.

11:00

All Albertans deserve to be a part of shaping the future of this province and sharing in its prosperity. We recognize the structural challenges that many indigenous communities face, and this UCP government is committed to help alleviate some of the challenges with the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. Madam Speaker, while there is still a lot more work to be done, I am happy to stand with all members of this Chamber to help bring indigenous people into this province's economic engine and continue working together with them for years to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for his comments. One of the lines he used early on that struck me was about the moral obligation we have, and I was wondering if I could ask the member to expand a bit with some context on that moral obligation and the moral case that we have for this bill, for the dignity of work in these First Nation communities. It's really important for individuals to have work. It's through work that many people find so much purpose and direction in their lives.

I'm going to quote from *Laborem Exercens* by Pope John Paul II to expand on this point. It's applicable to everyone, and many of the First Nation communities I spoke with often brought up the dignity of work and their desire for it. It goes as follows:

And yet, in spite of all this toil – perhaps, in a sense, because of it – work is a good thing for man. Even though it bears the mark of a bonum arduum [or difficult joy], in the terminology of Saint Thomas, this does not take away the fact that, as such, it is a good thing for man. It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man's dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it. If one wishes to define more clearly the ethical meaning of work, it is this truth that one must particularly keep in mind. Work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity – because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes “more [of] a human being.”

This quote identifies for me and I think is very informative for this Chamber how the work that is lacking in these communities and the moral obligation we have to participate in providing that gives direction to an individual and also to a family. It ties an individual and family to a community, to a plot of land, the land that these First Nation communities are so proud to defend as being the first inhabitants and having that territorial responsibility of sustainably developing it, as the member mentioned.

I could also go on, quoting Martin Luther King and others to the same effect, on how all labour uplifts humanity and has dignity and is important and thus should be undertaken with painstaking excellence. I find this theme being repeated over and over again by all members, on both sides of the House: the importance of work and the importance of bringing dignity to individuals. I could just as easily quote from many of our friends on the opposite side of the

aisle, who support socialist mantras, who see the importance of work.

From our perspective on this bill, could the member comment on how work brings dignity to these communities so that they can be uplifted and how work gives them a hand up instead of a handout?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Guthrie: Well, I think you've actually said it all there. You answered the question pretty much right after, which, you know, I certainly do appreciate. One of the things maybe to speak to is that from the capital side I think there are so many opportunities out there for indigenous people, and there are great ideas. There's so much work that goes into starting a business. Just from taking the idea, you move that along, you come up with your business plan, and you do the pro forma. This doesn't just take months of planning; this can take years of planning. Then it comes to having and obtaining the capital to get into business and to finding investors and securing loans. That's probably one of the biggest hurdles in getting into business, and I think that it can be very discouraging when people have these ideas and they're unable to move them forward.

I know, for myself, I got a tremendous amount of satisfaction from being in business, farming and ranching as well as owning a franchise business, and I know the work that goes into both of those jobs. I know farming and ranching. I was in east-central Alberta riding around in my four-wheeler and moving cattle, and there were tent rings and firepits out in the hills. When I was moving cattle and I was using this four-wheeler, I often thought about the people that used to come to this area. This was a hunting . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 14. Just to clarify, I will be supporting this bill. I do think that any economic opportunities are definitely beneficial. I think that as I start, though, I should recognize and self-identify that I am a Métis person. I think it would be a little bit disingenuous for me not to stand to speak in support of the indigenous communities and the potential for this and talk in response to some of the stories.

Of course, growing up, coming from or living in the Crownsnest Pass and then on Vancouver Island for a while, our family didn't really talk about our history. I only recently found out, well, in my early twenties, that I was actually Métis and that I have Mohawk in my family heritage. I think part of that is because of the fact that on my father's side, when he was growing up, it was easier to not identify as Métis, to not recognize our history because, as with many Métis people, visually I can go through life looking very Caucasian, my father as well, so it was much easier for him to live in a world where he looked more Caucasian than First Nations.

In saying that, it wasn't a conversation. My heritage and my background and my experiences growing up were not in the traditional sense of learning about my heritage and my Mohawk history. It wasn't until I became a social worker and understood that it was important to me and started working at Métis Child and Family Services and working within Children's Services with First Nations groups, specifically Bigstone Cree Nation and a couple of different First Nations communities, that I really became confident in wanting to get to know my family history better.

In saying that, I appreciate all the conversations that I'm hearing from both sides of the House in regard to: how are we supporting and working with our brothers and sisters in our First Nations and Métis communities? There are struggles, and I think, you know, we all acknowledge that historically we could have done better. I

believe that from my own personal experience, trying to identify myself and learn about who I am as an individual based on my family history. I recognize the struggle that many people within the First Nations and Métis community have around identifying who they are because of the lack of culture and the loss of our history. I think that any opportunities that governments can do and have around recognizing that there have been failures in the past and how we can move forward to work together are extremely important.

In saying that, what I would like to talk about a little bit, when you're looking at the development of these corporations and these boards, is recognizing that if we're going to be truthful and we're going to work on reconciliation and we're going to move forward and ensure that this is truly about indigenous opportunities and that this is about indigenous opportunities and corporations, then the people that are going to be sitting on this board, that are going to be working with the minister actually represent First Nations and Métis people, that the representation on those boards is by Métis and First Nation individuals.

I recognize again: I self-identify. I am not a registered Métis person because of the fact that we don't have the ability to do the history and do the genogram that I need to do to be able to be registered. So that may be a question that comes up as well around representation on boards and how that works. But, in saying that, if this is truly about making sure that indigenous communities have opportunities, then it makes sense that people that sit on those boards are indigenous people. You know, again, as we talk about symbolism, it can't just be a symbol to say that we've created this board to work with the minister to create these opportunities. Our First Nations people need to be on it.

11:10

What I also want to talk about is that I've heard a lot about the struggles within the First Nations and Métis community. Again, coming from Children's Services, I recognize many of the dynamics that the culture and the community experience, but I also want to recognize that the indigenous community is extremely strong. They are entrepreneurs in their own way, and there have been many, many positive things come within the First Nations and Métis community, and it's not just about the culture. The culture is amazing. I mean, I feel at home the most when I'm with people within the Métis community, for sure. But I also want to talk about the fact that there have been investment funds created in the past to provide capital to indigenous communities that specifically work with the forestry industry, that specifically work with the service industry, with the financial sectors, with the agricultural industry. We have people who work in the trapping industry and the hunting industry. We have opportunities with people that are business owners, that are working in nonprofit organizations, that are leaders within the community.

I believe that as we talk about community and we talk about the First Nations community, the indigenous community, the Métis community, we also recognize that there are self-drivers, that there are many people who have done and are doing amazing things within the economic world, within the First Nations communities. You know, Bigstone Cree Nation is a very, very well-established community that does amazing things with their community supports, their social supports, and their economic benefits. We see that within Siksika. There are many other First Nations communities in Alberta that are extremely successful and are also addressing the socioeconomic impact issues within their community.

I just wanted to say that, again, I am a strong believer in any opportunities that we can look at. Working with the community is a benefit. Anything that we can do to strengthen the economy of Alberta is a benefit, so I will be supporting this bill, but I just wanted

to make sure that it was acknowledged that I think I am the only Métis person in the Legislature.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: It will be an interesting research project for the Speaker later.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to stand and speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, the creation of that corporation. Partners in prosperity is the way that we've tried to look at this. As I thought about that phrase, "partners in prosperity," I had to go back to understand and think about my experiences with my indigenous friends.

My first experience that I'd like to tell you about was decades ago. When I first started out in my career, I actually started out as a teacher. The first teaching opportunity and position I received was from a school called Little Pony Private Institute. This was in Fort Macleod. My teaching responsibility was to teach all of the subjects in grades 9, 10, and 11, so bright-eyed and bushy-tailed I got at this teaching assignment. Who we were teaching were the kids that were either kicked off the reserve, the Blood reserve, or the kids that there was just no place for within the system. So there were a lot of challenges. I remember one time being completely overwhelmed by the amount of preparation I had to do for all of the different subjects in all the different grades and going to my principal and talking to him. He was the kind of person that really got it. He really understood what we were trying to accomplish in this school. As he spoke to me, he said: "Look, it doesn't matter who you blame. It matters where you're going. It matters where these kids are going to go. Whose fault is it that they got kicked off the reserve or out of the schools? Whose fault is it that they don't have a good family life? It doesn't matter. What matters is where we're going with this."

When we talk about partners in prosperity, I think about that experience and that conversation with him. But I also think about another experience when I was teaching. It was springtime, and a lot of the kids had decided that they weren't going to start coming to school. This was my first year teaching, and the principal said to me: you need to go out there and you need to round up the kids. So we got on the bus. We went out, and we found the first one, and as soon as we found the first one, they'd tattle on the other ones, and we'd be able to find the rest. There was one final guy that I needed to find, and they told me where he was. So I went and knocked on the door of the house, and the mom came and said: "Yup. Absolutely. You need to get that guy to school." She told me where his room was. I went back and I thought: you know, I'm going to scare this guy so he's serious about coming back to school. I knocked not too hard but pretty hard on that door, and the door fell in. This guy jumps up and he says: "Okay. You got me. I will come back to school." From that time on, they said that if you don't come to school, I'm going to actually come out and knock down the doors.

I experienced first-hand the living conditions that some of these First Nations have to live in. It was a real eye-opener for me as a young teacher, to see that they lived in one of the most prosperous countries in this world, yet they were still not partners in that prosperity. This was something that really concerned me at a young age, and I just thought: well, what is the solution to this?

Now, one of the things that I've been impressed with is that the last government took a lot of effort to be able to try to figure this out. But one thing that I wasn't impressed with was that they were not willing to finish the equation. If you cannot provide a vehicle or

a tool for our First Nations brothers and sisters to be able to be partners in that prosperity, then you haven't finished the equation. We can talk about reconciliation. We can try to understand it. We can try to be able to move forward from the '60s scoop. But unless we provide them with a tool to be able to have a bright future, which is what we thought Alberta and Canada were all about, then we haven't finished the equation.

This is why I have to congratulate my friend and colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations for the work that he has done on this bill and on this vehicle to be able to help create this partners-in-prosperity approach. As I sat down and talked with him and understood where he's trying to go with this, I really got on board. I really started to realize that, you know, this could actually be the finishing of that equation, that decades ago I questioned about: where is that equation going? I actually want to congratulate him on bringing this bill forward.

Now, another conversation I had, Madam Speaker, was with a friend of mine. I've lived in Cardston for 13 years. It used to actually be Cardston-Taber-Warner, and then, unfortunately, the boundaries got split and I lost that section or that portion of my riding, and it's now Cardston-Siksika. But for the four years prior to this, the Blood reserve, which is the largest reserve in Canada, was part of my riding.

11:20

I had a neighbour who was First Nations, and we had some fairly good conversations, usually over a barbecue and a steak, and we would sit down and chat. One of the things that he told me was a real barrier for him – he was very entrepreneurial, but one of the biggest barriers that he said he had struggled with growing up was that he had no property rights on the reserve. He had no ability to do what many of us do who start up small businesses, which is to take your property and use that as equity against a business. He had no ability to do that. He said that unfortunately this actually tied his hands behind his back to be able to start a business.

He actually did find an ability to do that, but his ability to start a business was going and working in a regular job and then trying to save up as much as he could. Finally, after a long time he was able to put a down payment on a business and buy a business. You know, I took my hat off to this guy. He was actually able to get over something that a lot of people on the reserve aren't. This issue of not being able to own property is a real barrier to our First Nations that are business oriented, that want to be able to get ahead through that vehicle.

This is a solution to that problem. Obviously, I am going to support this bill. I'm very much in support of this bill because it addresses one of the major problems that the people on First Nations reserves are facing, which is that they don't have their own property. The ability to have property, to be able to leverage that property in order to be able to start a business is something that many people on this side of the House have done. I know I've done it.

This is something that I am actually extremely excited about, being able to provide that opportunity. Not to own property, because this is something that is not on the table for our First Nations brothers and sisters, but what it does do is it provides them an opportunity to be able to share in that prosperity and be partners in it with a different kind of vehicle. We haven't solved the problem yet of private property ownership. I hope we do, because I think that that will actually provide more opportunities for them, but that isn't on the table. What is on the table is the ability to have this Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, and I think that there are going to be some fantastic things that will come from that.

Now, one of the things that I was also very happy to see, Madam Speaker, was the consultation that took place. Because of what I've seen in the last four years in terms of consultation, I was pleased to see that the minister was willing to go out and not just talk to corporations but also talk to indigenous and Métis organizations and groups so that they could give him the kind of information that he needs to be able to make a really good bill and a good opportunity and vehicle.

He's been able to talk with Eagle Spirit energy, the First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Project Reconciliation, Iron Coalition, Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and many, many more. He also was able to speak with Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, EPCOR. In speaking with these organizations, they have been able to tap into lots of employment opportunities for First Nations in those areas. They are some of the largest employers of First Nations up in those areas, so it was actually a natural fit for them to talk to these companies.

I wanted to finish up what I started on, and that is the importance of finishing the equation. If we are going to help and make sure that there are opportunities for all people in this province, then we have got to provide those tools. We've got to provide those vehicles that will allow that prosperity for all sectors. Whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever your past has been, we need to be able to provide them with those opportunities. This is a brilliant representation of being able to provide that type of a vehicle for a people that have really struggled. I've seen it first-hand. I've lived in Cardston, as I said, for 13 years, and I've watched some of the very difficult scenarios for many families on the Blood reserve.

So this is exciting. I look forward to being able to see how this rolls out. I look forward to seeing not just the corporation – "corporation" is a cold term – but the individual stories that are going to come from this, where this actually does help individuals and individual families to be able to reach those goals that they have.

With that, Madam Speaker, again, I am in support and hope that all members of the House will be in support of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any more speakers to the bill? The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We made some excellent progress here today. I've also just been quite moved, actually, by people from both sides of the aisle speaking in favour of this bill. I really do appreciate the steps that have been taken here and the really thoughtful commentary.

On behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Relations I'd like to close debate. I do believe that we have general consensus that will be in favour. I don't believe that a division will be required, but we'll see what happens here. Hopefully, everyone is in favour.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I would never guess what members of this Assembly would do.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: You did it.

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Deputy Speaker, I think we've made some excellent progress here. I'd move to adjourn until 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:28 a.m.]

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