



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, 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

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, this morning I had the absolute honour and pleasure to represent all members of the Assembly at a citizenship ceremony in the Federal Building just a couple of hours ago. Her Honour Lois Mitchell, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, presided over the Canadian citizenship ceremony. It was my pleasure to welcome some of Edmonton's newest, in fact, some of Canada's newest citizens, and 31 of them have joined us in the gallery this afternoon. I invite you to rise and receive the welcome to your new life as Canadian citizens.

Thank you, hon. members.

Also visiting us today, guests of the Minister of Service Alberta: D'Arcy Donald, David Brown, Brad Mitchell, and Heather Coleman.

Guests of the Minister of Health here for Catholic health week are Cliff Enfield, Conny Avila, Eleanor Stewart, Glenda Coleman-Miller, Leah Janzen, MaryAnn Beer, Shelly Decker, and Candice Keddie. Welcome. Hon. members, please welcome them to the Assembly.

Before we continue with the rest of the Routine today, I just would like to point out that all members received copies of amendments to the standing orders that were approved by the Assembly yesterday, October 8, 2019. They can be found on green printed paper, placed on the members' desks for ease. We will be printing new and refreshed standing orders at a later date, when you will receive the entire package.

Members' Statements

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

Addiction Treatment

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's yet to be a jurisdiction in Canada that has succeeded in developing a reliable addiction recovery continuum. Imagine making the decision to enter recovery, reaching out for help, and having nobody there to help you. The detox mats are full, the local treatment centres have a three-month waiting list, and there are no treatment beds for teens nor supports for family.

In his book *The Selfish Brain* psychiatrist Dr. Robert L. DuPont states that there are five steps to recovery: identification, intervention, treatment, aftercare, and then a life of recovery. We must pursue a path forward that connects all of these steps in a seamless way so that we make sure that nobody falls through the cracks.

So many of us have been touched by addiction. Too many times I've heard stories from families who have lost loved ones because treatment and recovery options just weren't available. I want to be part of a government that's going to fix this so that I can hear from families celebrating getting their loved ones back because of recovery.

Addiction is a disease like no other, and when someone is struggling with a disease, there is a moral obligation to help them

seek treatment. I am proud that our Premier and this government are committed to making recovery more accessible across this province. We have an obligation as legislators and as human beings to look out for our most vulnerable and to support them in their times of struggle. I fully intend on continuing to support this government in its efforts to address the pressing issue of addiction, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Recovery works; recovery is possible. I have seen it, and I'm so glad our government will be there for those who need it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows would like to make a statement.

Yom Kippur

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night at sunset Jewish Albertans began their observance of Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar and the conclusion of the High Holy Days. Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, is a solemn time for reflection on one's own life over the past year, examination of personal shortcomings, and the seeking of forgiveness. According to tradition this is the time when God will seal the inscription of each person's fate for the coming year in the Book of Life. Many of our Jewish friends, neighbours, colleagues, and relatives will observe Yom Kippur through fasting and refraining from work and worldly tasks. Many will spend much of today in synagogue and participate in intensive prayer.

On behalf of the NDP Official Opposition I wish all Jewish people in Alberta and around the world an easy and meaningful fast. [Remarks in Hebrew] Thank you.

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

Thanksgiving and Alberta Agriculture

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 14 Canadians in Alberta and across the country will celebrate Thanksgiving. This holiday is so much more than simply eating excessive amounts of great food with family and friends. Thanksgiving is about being thankful for all the blessings one has received throughout the year, whether those blessings are having a healthy family, a job, economic prosperity, another wedding anniversary. There are so many things to be thankful for.

One of the more important and often forgotten aspects of Thanksgiving is that we give thanks for a bountiful harvest and all the farmers that help produce it. From grain farmers to ranchers, all Alberta farmers play a crucially important role in providing meals for people through Canada and the world, not only for Thanksgiving but for everyday life as well.

Alberta has approximately 70,000 farmers that are actively farming 21 million hectares of land, which equates to approximately 31 per cent of Canada's total farmland. Alberta wheat farmers produced 10 million tonnes of wheat in 2018. This wheat found its way into the bread, turkey stuffing, and desserts shared by millions of Albertan and Canadian families. In addition to wheat, Alberta farmers produced 5.9 million tonnes of canola. While wheat and canola may be our primary grain products, Alberta is also responsible for producing large amounts of barley, oats, and corn. Alberta cattle ranchers were responsible for 41 per cent of Canada's total beef production, and Alberta hog farmers are responsible for 10 per cent of Canada's total pork production. In addition to beef and pork, Alberta is responsible for a significant portion of the chicken, turkey, sheep, and bison market.

Thanksgiving is a remarkable opportunity to catch up with family and friends and to take a break from politics to enjoy a meal in good

spirits. So this year when you are gathered with your loved ones, sharing potatoes, gravy, turkey, ham, stuffing, and pie, remember to be thankful to all the Alberta farmers who made your Thanksgiving feast possible.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Technology Industry Programs

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diversifying the economy needs commitment and a broad-based effort. Our government did that. That's why we created 3,000 tech spaces across Alberta in our 2018 budget. The data shows that that was the right thing to do. The University of Calgary established new programs in computer engineering as part of our effort. Already, 80 per cent of students in this brand new program have found work, and the graduates are highly desired in Calgary's digital sector. That is why it's a shame that this UCP government is looking at making cuts to postsecondary education, making tuition more expensive. Making it harder for Albertans to get the education they need will neither help Alberta's technology companies nor Albertans looking to find jobs in this sector.

But it seems like the UCP government doesn't want Albertans to work in the tech sector nor to grow this sector here in Alberta. In the summer this UCP government cancelled our artificial intelligence program and froze the investor tax credit and digital media tax credit without warning, which caused great uncertainty and made it harder for Alberta companies to attract investment. The government is quick to point to its 4 and a half billion dollar corporate giveaway, but the corporate tax does nothing, not one thing, for start-ups or companies looking to scale. The Premier is either wilfully ignorant or simply doesn't care. Thanks to this short-sighted decision by this UCP government, technology companies are now struggling to find the capital they need to grow, and investors are now looking elsewhere.

I'm calling on this government to unfreeze these tax credits immediately because that is what the business community is asking for and these tax credits are actually creating jobs and diversifying the economy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

1:40 Fire Prevention Week

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Starting Sunday and continuing until Saturday, Canada marks Fire Prevention Week. Fire kills eight people each week in Canada, with 73 per cent of those deaths coming from residential fires. Now, this is the 23rd year Canada will mark Fire Prevention Week, and this year's campaign is Not Every Hero Wears a Cape; Plan and Practice Your Escape!

The national fire prevention association hopes that this week will educate everyone about the small but important actions that they can do to help keep those around them safe. These include making sure every child can recognize two exits from each room, knowing how to open windows, and remembering to keep low to the ground if there's smoke in the air. In a typical home fire you may have as little as one to two minutes to escape your house, so I want to encourage all Albertans to take steps to make sure your whole family is prepared in the event of a worst-case scenario. At the very least, please remember to test your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detector. The national fire prevention association has a number of resources available on its website to assist families who want to prepare their kids for a house fire situation. In addition, the government of Alberta's website provides a number of tips on how

to prevent house fires and how to make sure your alarms are functional.

I also want to take this time to specifically thank Spruce Grove fire services and the Stony Plain fire department as well as the rest of our firefighters around the province for their daily acts of bravery and heroism.

I hope that this week is a great success and that the initiatives and ideas put forward by either the government of Alberta or local fire departments help Albertans to make their homes safer. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Decore would like to make a statement.

Friends of St. Michael's Society of Edmonton

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 1 I had the opportunity to attend the 2019 minister's seniors' service awards presentation at Government House, where I had the privilege of copresenting an award to the Friends of St. Michael's Society of Edmonton. These awards recognize the dedication and contributions of seniors who work to improve the lives of the people in their communities.

The Friends of St. Michael's Society of Edmonton is a charitable organization operating in Edmonton-Decore that primarily supports the work of St. Michael's Health Group, a long-term seniors' care organization. Members of the society volunteer in a variety of capacities. Many individuals spend time in long-term care facilities serving meals, assisting with transportation, and spending quality time with the residents. The energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers helps to build relationships and a sense of community for the residents, which is so important to their quality of life.

In addition to facilitating volunteer work at the long-term care centres, the Friends of St. Michael's Society also works tirelessly to fundraise through bingo nights and charitable casino events in order to purchase necessary items for long-term care residents. Equipment like ceiling lifts and slings is not always covered by social assistance programs, so they are provided to residents who need them at no charge, thanks to the work of the society. Additionally, funds raised by the Friends of St. Michael's are used to cover the costs of all community access and recreation activities for long-term care residents.

It has been my privilege to work and represent the incredible volunteers of the Friends of St. Michael's Society in my capacity as MLA for Edmonton-Decore, and I want to truly congratulate every individual member on a well-deserved award. Your work has touched the lives of so many seniors and their families, and it inspires others to become involved in their community. Thank you to all of them and, once again, congratulations.

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

Animal Rights Activists' Turkey Farm Protest

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm from cattle country, so it was a little startling to have our phones blow up over turkeys. Now, I realize that many in this House may not be particularly interested in turkeys, until this upcoming weekend anyway, and frankly the same can be said for most of the constituents that have been contacting my office. What they are interested in is farming, property rights, and the ability for law-abiding farmers to work in peace.

On Monday, September 2 approximately 60 protesters took it upon themselves to trespass onto a turkey farm near Fort Macleod with the express intention of disrupting work. These protesters trespassed onto the property and set up their demonstration in the

barn which housed many of the birds. These protesters, when asked to leave, put forward three demands: one, release some of the turkeys to a sanctuary; two, media coverage of the barn's interior; and three, to walk away without charges.

This unlucky farmer called the police, and the trespassers called also, allegedly to keep the peace. In order to get the protesters to move on, the farmer allowed Global News into the barn as asked, gave five turkeys to the group, and allowed them to walk away in peace. The headline for this should be Ideological Extremists Occupy Rural Business and Hold Farmer Hostage until Demands Were Met, if you ask me.

My constituents have made it very clear in the past weeks that they feel this farmer was treated unfairly. They worry what they would do if put in a similar situation. They know they are not breaking any agricultural laws, but they are concerned that their particular livestock may be the target of these criminals' next attack.

It's high time that these trespassers face the full extent of the law. This farmer was singled out, besmirched, and humiliated despite the fact that Global News did not film one instance of animal cruelty as the protesters alleged. Since when do we allow groups to extort individuals in their own homes?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Community Foundation of Lethbridge Vital Signs Report

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the agriculture minister lobbed a personal insult at me during question period. He said that it was bad that I didn't attend a ribbon cutting for the new Cavendish potato processing facility, and it's true. At the same time, the Lethbridge community foundation launched their Vital Signs report, a series of indicators about economic, social, and environmental well-being. Given that I already knew about the hundreds of new jobs that were coming to Lethbridge because I was at the table when we funded and supported the city of Lethbridge to attract the Cavendish investment, I chose to support the staff and board of the community foundation by learning more about the annual Vital Signs report.

The Member for Lethbridge-East was not at the Vital Signs launch. Let me share what he didn't learn. He didn't learn that 27,000 people in southwest Alberta have access to public transportation now for the first time due to the highway 3 connector or that 58 people a week attend our Parkrun at Henderson Lake, organized by Jim and Ellen Carter, or that 68 people per day on average are served at the homeless shelter and hundreds more facts and figures that describe our region. The Member for Lethbridge-East didn't get to recognize executive director Charleen Davidson or Rob Dowell, the superhero data nerd behind Vital Signs, or board member Ronda Reach and the Vital Signs steering committee. He didn't get to talk to his own Lethbridge-East constituents on the board, like Renee Richards.

Mr. Speaker, when the minister of agriculture lobs personal attacks at me for the apparent crime of learning more about Lethbridge, it says more about him than it does about me. The Member for Lethbridge-East may want to ask his colleagues to lay off. I know that he actually wants to focus on common priorities, and I also know that he, too, like me, can't be everywhere either.

People in Lethbridge have been confused when UCP members and the Premier himself have come to town to hurl insults at the city, the police chief, progressive voters, the university, and me personally. It's just not how we do things, and it's not how we will continue to improve Lethbridge's vital signs.

Canadian Finals Rodeo

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, this October the annual Canadian Finals Rodeo, most commonly known as the CFR, will be held in Red Deer, Alberta. It is widely acknowledged as one of the world's most prestigious rodeos, showcasing the very best in the sport that the world has to offer. From barrel racing and bull riding to steer wrestling and saddle bronc, the competition is sure to be tough this year. The CFR brings with it the end of the Canadian rodeo season, determining this year's Canadian champions in each of the rodeo sports.

Thousands of people from across Canada will attend to watch this year's competition, with the most important viewers being the young kids who watch with wide eyes and big dreams, hoping one day that they could be representing their small town in the arena. At every small-town rodeo, I see children growing up surrounded by the culture of community spirit and strong work ethic that embodies what it means to be an Albertan. As these children age, they move on from mutton busting to high school rodeo, becoming involved in an environment that fosters more than just rodeo but exemplary conduct and sportsmanship. Opportunities for scholarships emerge as dedication and skill are proved.

This year we had many young Albertans head down to Wyoming in July for the 2019 National High School Finals Rodeo, a defining milestone in one's rodeo career. A huge congratulations to all of those who made our province so proud while representing us on an international stage.

The next step in a rodeo career is to make it onto a college rodeo team and then to pro rodeo. Each year a select handful of Albertans qualify for the CFR after years of hard work and dedication. To our local cowboys and cowgirls who will represent us at the CFR in Red Deer: my colleagues and I want to wish you all the very best of luck.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the Premier's \$4.5 billion corporate handout is not growing the economy, and it's not growing jobs. But it has blown a massive hole in the budget, and now the Premier is breaking countless promises. Today we're going to talk about a whopper. The Premier promised to get tough on rural crime, but instead he's forcing rural Albertans to either pay new taxes or accept cuts to policing. Why is the Premier breaking his promises just to fund money to wealthy corporations?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know we're on the right track when the NDP has to resort to the old tactics of deception, of fear and smear. First of all, there is no \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut. This year the revenue offset will be \$100 million. But there was a \$2.3 billion loss in revenue from businesses after the NDP raised those taxes. On the question of rural crime, this government will be investing more, not less, in rural crime to fight the wave of property crime that began under NDP mismanagement.

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows full well that the budget numbers were the same before the election as they were after, but what has changed are the lines he is feeding to Albertans. He ran on cutting taxes for Albertans, but what he's

actually doing is forcing municipalities to raise taxes for him. He's robbing Peter to pay Paul's shareholders. Why do only CEOs and shareholders get the payoff while the rest of Albertans have to pay for the Premier's broken promises?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, now we can see on full display the gross fiscal incompetence of the NDP. When she says that the budget numbers were the same before and after the election: complete rubbish. In fact, as will become evident in the budget presented two weeks from now, the NDP tried to deceive the Alberta public by presenting completely fake budget numbers, which was the basis of their platform. In fact, revenues are dramatically down. Why? Because of the NDP recession, driven in part by their higher taxes on everything.

Ms Notley: Well, I'm disappointed that the Premier is actually throwing public officials who worked on the annual report that was released on a Friday – I do appreciate that the Premier didn't want to have Albertans see it. It was put together by public officials and very much confirmed everything that Albertans were presented by us before the budget, unlike the Premier, who has simply broken promises. He is now asking municipalities to download taxes onto the very people he promised to cut taxes for. Why, Mr. Speaker? Why?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, within days of the last election I sat down for my first transition briefing with senior public servants, including those from Treasury Board and Finance. They presented to me, in cold hard numbers, how far off the NDP had been in its irresponsible and misleading fiscal projections. They also, interestingly, presented to me the fact that their projected revenue shortfall from the job-creation tax cut was actually less than what we had estimated in our platform. In other words, we were erring on the side of caution. The NDP was trying to wish its way out of the deficit.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

Ms Notley: Well, I will simply refer the Premier to the fiscal annual report that was released while they were in government, on a Friday at the end of a day deep in June, that actually confirms the numbers we used.

Municipal Funding Rural Police Service Funding

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier also tried to claim that all municipalities were onside and they were all part of Team Alberta. The fact is that there are two teams: your corporate friends and everyone else. Wetaskiwin, Barrhead, Sundre, Foothills county all say that what your government is doing is forcing them to raise taxes. Why won't you tell the truth and admit that they're not onside because you're breaking the very promises you made in the election?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, public servants presented me with an objective analysis of the state of the province's finances within days of the last election, and they demonstrated that the province's fiscal situation had deteriorated by some \$6 billion over the fourth year of this mandate from what the NDP ran on, what they presented to Albertans in their third-quarter update. A \$6 billion gap: that's 15 per cent of the provincial budget.

On the question of taxes, it's the NDP that raised taxes on incomes, on everything, on energy, on businesses. It's the NDP that took money out of Albertans' pockets. We're putting . . .

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the election. During the election the Premier promised rural Albertans that he would fix rural crime, but when he had the chance, his number one action wasn't more police in communities. No. It was a \$4.5 billion handout to rich corporations. The county of Wetaskiwin has said that they have immense concern that policing will no longer be guaranteed and that costs to residents will go up significantly in taxes. Why did this Premier put corporate handouts ahead of funding for rural police?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, \$4.5 billion: not true. Secondly, support for rural police will be going up, not down. Thirdly, the leader of the NDP mentions the last election. I recall that was an election in which they accused our party and even the Minister of Municipal Affairs of associating with white supremacists. Now we have her friend and ally Justin Trudeau having been demonstrated to have a penchant for racial mockery through the practice of blackface, and she has yet to condemn the racial insensitivity of the Prime Minister, which Liberal MPs now say is embraced by the black community. I challenge her to denounce it today.

Ms Notley: Well, I'm going to focus on Wetaskiwin, Mr. Speaker. The county of Wetaskiwin took leadership when they hired an enhanced RCMP officer, a crime analyst, and three more peace officers, all of whom increased public safety in that part of rural Alberta. Now they're warning that the crime-fighting plan they had in place will almost certainly be diminished – their words – and overall policing will significantly decrease under the UCP plan, which is in writing, which they have given, which they have shared with people and the Premier will not acknowledge. Why is the Premier breaking promises to rural Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we know who broke promises to rural Albertans: the NDP, that hammered rural Alberta, which is why they lost every single rural seat in this province. We will be enhancing, not reducing, support for criminal justice in rural Alberta. But why did she evade that essential question? Why did she attack the Minister of Municipal Affairs for being a white supremacist in the last campaign? Her candidate did that, and now we've got her ally Justin Trudeau, who has insulted the office of Prime Minister, in blackface. Why can't she stand up and denounce the racial mockery of her ally Justin Trudeau?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Notley: I have one more question.

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

Ms Notley: I had one more question, the second supplemental.

The Speaker: No. You've already asked six questions total.

Ms Notley: My apologies if that's the case.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Rural Police Service Funding

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to note that one of the things the UCP campaigned on is that they would introduce no new taxes, but that's essentially what they're doing. That's not me speaking but, rather, the CAO of Barrhead county in reference to the Minister of Justice planning to download policing costs onto rural municipalities, a decision that will cost the county

nearly \$800,000 annually. To the minister: why won't you stand in this House and admit that you're cutting police funding for places like Barrhead county?

Mr. Schweitzer: Because we're not, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty simple. We are not cutting funding for rural policing. We are not. Can I say this one more time in this Legislature? We are increasing funding for policing. We are making sure that we consult with rural municipalities about police costing. We committed to doing that in the last campaign. We've also clearly stated, going back to the AUMA, a crowd of 1,000 people, to make sure that any additional dollars generated through police costing would go right back into more boots on the ground. Why is the NDP against 500 police officers?

2:00

Ms Ganley: The CAO of Barrhead county went further and agreed with what we've been saying for weeks. She said, quote, here we would be putting money in with no value add. That's right. Taxes go up, and police services don't improve. What is improving in this province? The bank accounts of big corporations benefiting from the Premier's \$4.5 billion giveaway. To the minister: is Barrhead county lying, or will you just admit that you've handcuffed Barrhead county and are forcing them to hike taxes?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I have travelled up to Fairview, I've been to Drayton Valley, I've been to Athabasca, and we have a rural crime crisis on our hands right now in the province of Alberta. The previous minister was absent from rural Alberta. She had to be just dragged to actually respond to rural crime. This Legislature was full of people time after time after time bringing forward their concerns. Right now in Alberta people have stopped calling. NDP justice: no justice for rural Alberta.

Ms Ganley: The question was whether the counties are lying or the minister is.

The CAO of Barrhead county told her council that the minister's planned cuts to rural policing would increase rural crime response times, and it should be noted that this minister and his UCP colleagues already voted against our government's rural crime strategy not once but twice. Now, as big corporations count the dollars they've been handed by this government, I really have to ask the minister: shouldn't you be more concerned about the safety of the very people that put you in that office?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I've met with over 1,000 Albertans in the last month talking about this exact issue of rural crime. We received over 3,000 submissions to our online survey and paper surveys at these town halls. This is the number one priority of my office, to make sure all Albertans feel safe, in particular rural Albertans right now, who do not feel safe. That's the legacy of the NDP. The legacy of that member as Justice minister is rural Alberta not feeling safe. We're doing everything we can to implement our strategy to tackle rural crime. We're going to make sure we get that done.

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

Municipal Funding

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal leaders that attended the AUMA convention are back in their local communities and reporting that the government intends to cut municipal funding by 15 per cent or more. The mayors of both Carstairs and Didsbury

have confirmed these cuts in their local papers just this week. In Didsbury they said that the cuts will come to funding for FCSS, the capital budget, even library funding. To the Premier: can you at least spare FCSS from bearing the brunt of covering your \$4.5 billion in corporate handouts?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will be very proud to deliver a budget on October 24 that will set the record straight, that will clean the mess up that we've inherited from the previous government, and that will respect taxpayers' dollars in this province. The previous government left a fiscal mess. They left us on track for a hundred billion dollars of accumulated debt. That's unacceptable to Albertans, and it's unacceptable to this government.

Member Ceci: You know, the Finance minister forgets that our fiscal management led to the Alberta child tax benefit, which dropped child poverty in this province 50 per cent, or by 40,000. You talk to those 40,000 children.

Now, these municipalities are concerned about the reduction in funding, and it seems all but certain that many will turn to property taxes to maintain services. To the Premier. You promised you wouldn't raise taxes. Why won't you admit here today that you're forcing municipal leaders to do your dirty work?

Mr. Kenney: We just heard the worst Finance minister in Alberta history tell us what his fiscal plan did. I'll tell you what his fiscal plan did. It raised taxes on everything. It raised taxes on energy through the carbon tax, on employers, on incomes, on everything. It quadrupled the province's debt. It had us on track for a hundred billion dollars in debt. It went through five credit downgrades, and it drove us into the longest and deepest recession in modern Alberta history and a jobs crisis. Mr. Speaker, he'll never be able to get away from that record.

Member Ceci: You know, my record includes funding major capital projects like the green line, increasing affordable child care in this province, and supporting municipalities.

This Premier is already shorting municipalities. The town of Bashaw has abandoned plans for a new wheelchair area in their local rink and is considering cuts due to their MSI reduction. One councillor said that he really wished that the province had told him about the cuts earlier. To the Premier: is this the type of partnership you crowed so much about yesterday?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, you know, it's curious to hear the failed Finance minister talking about property tax increases given that he voted for every single property tax increase that came before Calgary city council when he was a councillor. This member has never met a tax hike he doesn't love.

Energy War Room

Mr. Neudorf: For over a decade our energy industry has been targeted by organizations who are trying to land-lock Alberta's natural resources. They continue to campaign against our world-class energy sector and the men and women who are proud of the work they do in this industry. These Albertans, whose livelihoods are the subject of smears like the Tar Sands Campaign or labelled that they work for dirty oil, are tired of these baseless attacks, and so am I. We need a way to ensure that mistruths are countered by facts and that the real stories of a responsible industry are told and

To the Minister of Energy: can she tell us how this will be accomplished?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy is rising.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we have taken the important first steps of launching and creating the Canadian energy centre, a corporation with the mandate to fight for our energy sector and to fulfill our commitment to Albertans to set up an energy war room and to take a much more assertive approach to defending our energy sector and protecting the value of our natural resources. I'm looking forward to the official launch of the Canadian energy centre as it gets up and running. The economic future of our province depends upon it.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's and Canada's future and economic prosperity are at stake and given that Albertans want and need a voice that will separate fact from fiction to tell the truth about Alberta's energy industry, to the minister: can she tell us what the core function of the Canadian energy centre will be?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian energy centre will defend our energy sector. It will collaborate with industry, academics, indigenous peoples, and others and will be a leading and authoritative voice on Alberta's energy resources. It will focus on improving the perceptions about our oil and gas industry.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta has a world-class reputation when it comes to environmental, labour, and human rights standards and that we are immensely proud of our industry and workers, how can the minister reassure Albertans that the government will succeed in highlighting these important facts, that are consistently being misrepresented?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian energy centre has employed Tom Olsen, a long-time Alberta journalist and former legislative bureau chief, as its managing director. There will be three units. A rapid response unit will be responsible for issuing swift responses to misinformation. An energy literacy unit will create original content and elevate the general understanding of our energy sector. Finally, a data and research unit will be in charge of centralizing and analyzing data to reinforce this story for investors, researchers, and policy-makers.

Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

Member Loyola: In April 2018 an inexperienced driver drove a truck through a stop sign and struck the bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos hockey team, killing 16 people and injuring 13 more. The previous Alberta government took steps to ensure that all truck drivers have enough training to operate safely. It's outrageous that this government has now removed these safety standards and allowed undertrained rookie truck drivers back on Alberta's highways. How does the Minister of Transportation sleep at night knowing he has put so many Albertans at risk?

2:10

Mr. McIver: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, let me express my condolences to the victims of the Humboldt tragedy and then correct the record. The hon. member is wrong in what he just said. They didn't take steps. They planned to put a driver testing change in place, and then they crippled the government's ability to actually deliver it by having the number of driver examiners available to do that cut in half on March 1. The same day that they announced that, they crippled the government's ability to deliver that new standard. We're busy cleaning up the mess.

Member Loyola: It sounds like the minister is not listening, but perhaps he'll listen to Shelby Hunter of St. Albert, who lost her brother Logan in the crash. She said: it breaks my heart to know how many people's lives are at risk on these roads. Or to Tom Straschnitzki of Airdrie, whose son Ryan was seriously injured. He wrote, quote, come visit all 29 of us and explain why you would do this; hope it never happens to any of their kids or spouses or relatives. Minister, will you meet with these grieving Albertans, look them in the eye, and explain why you're willing to risk another tragedy like the one that they've already endured?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to Mr. Boulet from Lethbridge and had a nice chat with him, and I would talk to any other family members that wanted to. What I would tell them is that we are going to keep and raise the standards on driving. What the NDP government claims they did, they actually didn't do. They said that they would do it, and then on March 1 they cut the number of driver examiners available in half so that the new standards that they are bragging about couldn't be delivered. We will deliver those standards as soon as we clean up the mess that makes it impossible, left behind by the previous NDP government.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, I want to try this again out of respect for the families. Given that Toby Boulet of Lethbridge, whose son Logan died in the crash, said that the minister's decision is wrong and that, quote, economics have gotten in the way of lives, to the minister: is that really what's going on here? Is your government so in the pocket of big corporations that you're willing to risk another Humboldt tragedy?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the families involved with the Humboldt tragedy: our government's record will be better than the previous government's. It won't be hard to do, but we're going to work hard at it. The new, tougher MELT standards will be put in place. We have been busy hiring the trainers and the examiners so that we can do that. They left us in a heck of a hole, but we're going to dig out, and out of respect for all Albertans but especially for the victims of the Humboldt tragedy, whether they're from Alberta or another place, we will get it done. The previous government did not, full stop.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Health minister was asked if he's okay with 50 female employees being fired from their jobs at a long-term care facility in Vegreville. His response was that these women could reapply for their jobs, providing they take a pay cut of up to \$10 an hour. To the minister responsible for the status of women. One of your key responsibilities is to narrow the gender pay gap. Are you okay with these hard-working women being paid less?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much for the question. I would have to respond in this way. The importance right now in this province in terms of getting women back to work, if that's the question you're actually asking me, is going to be fulfilled by many different things. I actually want to highlight the Minister of Advanced Education, who is looking right now to the trades, where there is a humongous amount of opportunity. Did you know that we have 20,000 folks that are going to be retiring in the next little while? What a massive opportunity for women to really break into this field and be at the table. We're really excited about that. Thank you to him and also to the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for leading . . .

Member Irwin: Given that these women were caring for our seniors in less than ideal working conditions and given that they were awaiting the outcome of negotiations on a new contract before being suddenly kicked to the curb and given that this government handed over a \$4.5 billion gift to corporations, to the minister: do you really value corporate CEOs over hard-working front-line female health care workers?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, this is a great question, and I'll tell you what I do value. I value the fact that we have an immense opportunity to make sure that women are in the workforce in high-paying jobs. One of the things that we won't do is cut 180,000 jobs from the province because we attack the sector where 24 per cent of the people who work in that sector are women. In fact, many of those high-paying jobs are now not in existence as a result of the previous government's policies on oil and gas.

Member Irwin: Given that the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, a woman, has been silent in this House about 53 of her constituents being fired and given that while this government's corporate handout isn't creating jobs and now in Vegreville jobs for those female front-line workers are actually being lost, to the minister of status of women: did you not bring this up at cabinet, or did none of these dudes listen to you?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to reiterate that I find it rich coming from a government, a previous government that attacked an industry where a massive number of incredible women were at the cutting edge of high-paying jobs, contributing to their families, and making sure that they were able to participate in such a meaningful way. On top of that, our government has already brought forward policies to make sure that those women are brought into industries where those high-end jobs will be available to them again. We are obsessed with job creation. We will continue to be obsessed with job creation. I'm very honoured to be part of a government who sees that as a top priority.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen with a question.

Canadian Armed Forces Health Care Funding

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Trudeau Liberals have unilaterally cut funding for health care provided by Alberta's health system to members of the Canadian Armed Forces. This will leave the system with a significant shortfall to provide for their care, and I find this hard to believe. To the Minister of Health: can you please clarify if this is really the case, and what will the impact be on the women and men serving in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this is indeed the case. I'm dismayed by the decision of the Justin Trudeau government and Justin Trudeau's attempts to defend it. It's disrespectful to the provinces. It's hypocritical given Trudeau's recent campaign commitments to expand medicare when the reality is that his government cut health care funding. Most of all, it's disrespectful towards the forces' personnel, Mr. Speaker. I want to say directly to every CAF member in Alberta: our government honours your service, and this decision will make no difference in your access to health care in Alberta.

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

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm reassured by the minister's answer on Alberta's support for Canadian Forces members. Given how Albertans are concerned about this decision by the Liberals and given that it's incomprehensible how a decision like this could be made, to the Minister of Health: what input did our UCP government have in this change?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the answer is none. I was simply informed by DND that they had unilaterally amended their policy. In fact, officials from several provinces have contacted the federal government and been told that DND will not even share their rationale for these new rates. DND is a separate payer for forces' personnel, outside the Canada Health Act, so they have the authority to make the change, but we are incredibly dismayed by the way that they did it and by the way that Mr. Trudeau has stood by that decision.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I speak for all members in saying that I agree with the minister that this is disappointing and a disrespectful decision. To the minister: will he call on Justin Trudeau's Liberal government to reverse it?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. In fact, I announced earlier today that I am doing just that. On behalf of our government I'm calling on the Trudeau government to reverse this decision. I will be following up later today with a letter to the minister of defence to that effect. Our officials in the Health ministry have been in touch with their counterparts in other provinces as well, and I understand that some of the provinces are planning to follow up on their own, as we are, and that there is work under way for a joint response as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Education Budget 2019-2020

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Education minister said that the government is funding enrolment growth, but two days ago we heard the Finance minister say that Education funding might be the same as last year. That's not the same thing. Albertans still don't know the future of funding supports for classroom complexity in the form of educational assistants, counsellors, and others. To the Finance minister: will you commit to funding needed classroom supports and resources to

support our students, or are they on the chopping block to pay for your corporate tax giveaway?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I want to suggest this. In fact, I want to state this. Our job-creation tax cut is a measure that will attract investment, create job opportunities, and eventually lead to increased government revenues.

Mr. Speaker, we ran a campaign and Albertans elected this government to create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans and to turn the economy around, an economy that was in stagnation because of the policies of the previous government.

2:20

Ms Phillips: To the Finance minister: why can't the Finance minister do what every other government in the history of the province has done and tell boards in the fall what their budgets are? If the Finance minister is going to back-seat drive the Education file, why doesn't he just take the wheel and give the board some clarity?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During our campaign and in our platform we were abundantly clear on education and health care that we would commit to maintain funding and/or increase funding. We're committed to fund enrolment growth. We're committed to deliver more efficiently, remove redundancies, and deliver based on 21st-century delivery models. We will deliver better and save taxpayers of this province their dollars, having full respect for the taxpayers' dollars in this province.

Ms Phillips: Given that the 45 kids in a grade 5 class are going to be surprised to learn that they are redundant, Mr. Speaker, and given that we heard at our budget town halls that the Calgary board of education has never before not had a budget from the province by September, will the Finance minister just continue to do the Education minister's job for her and tell the boards whether they can expect classroom improvement funds, transportation grants, or other supports, or has he already done away with them to pay for his \$4.5 billion giveaway to already profitable corporations?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP took office, they actually rolled a budget out three days later than we will, so the reality is that we're delivering before they delivered during their first term. Secondly, when the NDP government raised corporate taxes by 20 per cent, they actually collected \$2.3 billion less revenue in the following three years. They were an example of fiscal irresponsibility on behalf of Albertans. We're committed to delivering a budget that will return responsibility to Alberta's finances.

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

Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Cenovus announced it had "excellent financial performance," a "25% dividend increase," and plans for even more dividend growth and plans for share repurchases. All good. There was one thing missing: jobs. Not a single new job. To the Minister of Energy: won't you admit that your \$4.5 billion corporate handout does nothing for regular Albertans who are looking for jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What disappoints me most is that the former NDP government did nothing in four years to defend the energy sector. Where were they when Justin Trudeau spoke about phasing out the oil sands? Where were they when Justin Trudeau vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline? Because of their actions it's led to pipeline capacity constraints, widening of differentials, curtailments, and the senseless NDP government crude-by-rail program. That's what I'm most disappointed in.

Mr. Sabir: Not a single new job.

Given that Suncor reports that "strong cash flow generation and our commitment to capital discipline allowed us to return value to our shareholders through \$658 million in dividends and \$552 million in share repurchases" – but again there is one thing missing, not a single new job – to the minister: why are billions of dollars going to corporations while the rest of us are told to brace for cuts to services?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government inherited an oil and gas sector that was in a crisis. They were in a crisis because of the actions of a socialist government, that was thrown out in the last election. For far too long we saw a government that was not willing to defend our energy sector. We're doing just that. We've taken a lot of steps to defend our energy sector. We've launched the Canadian energy centre, we've launched a public inquiry into the foreign sources of funding, we've brought in the royalty tax guarantee. We are working for our energy sector. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. We have heard questions; we'll hear answers. You might not like them, but we'll hear them.

Mr. Sabir: Given that we have lost 13,000 jobs in the resource sector alone in the last two months and given that there is no end in sight to the economic pain that has only been made worse by this Premier and this government in their massive gifts to big corporations, to the minister: will you commit today to scrapping this \$4.5 billion failed experiment and do something to actually create jobs and not kill them?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, I will take absolutely no lessons from the members opposite on what the industry needs to be successful. They spectacularly failed our oil and gas sector and created a jobs crisis of over 200,000 Albertans out of work. We were elected to clean up their messes, and that's exactly what we are doing. Their policies caused damage to this province. We are cleaning it up, and we will get Albertans back to work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Rural Police Service and Crime Prevention

Mr. Rowsell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents of my area continually hear about rural break-ins and thefts. These issues are arising due to a multitude of factors, including inadequate police coverage, poor economic conditions, and issues of addiction. Many of the crimes are being committed by repeat offenders. To the Minister of Justice: what steps are being taken to improve the communication, efficiency, and coverage of police departments to stop this epidemic?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural crime is a top priority of my office right now to make sure that we stem the growth of rural crime across our province. I'm meeting regularly with the chiefs of police from across Alberta to make sure that we have clear lines of communication to track individuals that are repeat offenders in our communities. A quote that was driven home to me from our Grande Prairie town hall: my biggest concern of repeat offenders is escalating with very little consequence; I personally feel unsafe knowing that these people are easily released and living down the street, offending and reoffending. We're taking all the steps that we can to make sure that we crack down on rural crime.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that western provinces see the highest rural crime per capita in all of Canada and given that numerous rural property owners have had so many thefts that they now are being denied theft insurance and given that the crime rate has been continually trending upwards over the last few years, to the Minister of Justice: what steps are being made to help these residents who are now unable to get coverage for continued theft and break-ins?

Mr. Schweitzer: One of the most eye-opening things in the town halls that we've held across Alberta is the number of people that have stopped reporting crimes over the last four years. They're simply tired of reporting. One of the things that was brought up to me in Airdrie: nonreporting is common; if I have a theft of less than \$10,000, it's not worth reporting because my deductible is \$5,000 and I'll lose my status.

Mr. Speaker, we have a real crime issue in our province. We're tackling this head-on. We're looking at solutions to also cut off the monetization of stolen property. Look for more details from us soon.

Mr. Rowswell: Given that the province of Alberta has seen an increase in rural crime under the NDP and given that I've heard many concerns from local residents about inadequate training for law enforcement professionals and given that Albertans want and deserve to feel safe and secure in their homes, to the minister: what is the government's plan to ensure that our local, front-line service workers have the proper training in order to keep the province safe and prosperous?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, one of the highlights of my recent tour of the province was meeting with Alberta Citizens on Patrol and Rural Crime Watch members from across our province. These people are the heart and soul of rural Alberta, and they are coming up with really innovative ways to support our police in tackling crime. They've got apps; they've got technology. They have wide networks that are helping us solve crime across Alberta. We're making sure that we work collaboratively with them and with the RCMP on establishing best practices and making sure as well that as these apps are developed, they're spread across Alberta.

2:30 Family and Community Support Services Funding

Ms Renaud: A city councillor from my St. Albert constituency asked the Minister of Community and Social Services at the AUMA convention to deny rumours she'd been hearing that the family and community support services program, also known as FCSS, would be cut by 50 per cent. Instead of confirming that she wouldn't cut this critical program in half, the minister only said that she was, quote, fighting tooth and nail, unquote, with her cabinet colleagues. To the minister. Here's another chance. Is your government really considering cutting FCSS in half?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Albertans know the state of our government's finances and that we are in the process of developing our budget. We value the important role of the FCSS program in the fact that it does create strong communities. We're working very diligently at this time to review all the programs and services within the ministry to ensure that we're supporting the most vulnerable and those who are most in need.

Ms Renaud: Given that at AUMA this minister was reminded that any cuts to FCSS would have a negative effect on efforts to combat homelessness, domestic violence, and many other issues and given that while programs funded by FCSS are left in limbo and fearing the worst, yet this government took no time to cut a \$4.5 billion cheque to big corporations, to the minister: is it hard to represent programs that your government clearly doesn't prioritize?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to speak with many stakeholders, councillors, and reeves across the province, and I understand the importance of this program. We've had discussions on how important this program is, and I'm comforted by the fact that we're mutually aligned in the understanding that we need to take care of the most vulnerable in our province. Our goal is to ensure that hard-earned taxpayer dollars are going to those who need it the most.

Ms Renaud: It's not what you say; it's what you do.

Given that the minister claimed at AUMA to understand the benefit FCSS has on Alberta communities, to the minister: will you stand in this House and actually fight tooth and nail for FCSS, which you have had no problem doing for the Premier's \$4.5 billion gift to corporations?

Mrs. Sawhney: Again, Mr. Speaker, the FCSS program impacts over 300 municipalities across the province, and we are cognizant of the importance of this program. Again, I'll reiterate that we're evaluating all programs and services while we prepare for the next budget, but what's core to our approach is that the vulnerable are indeed supported. A strong economy, a balanced budget: these will all ensure that programs such as FCSS can remain successful and sustainable in the long term. That's what we're fighting for.

Climate Change Strategy

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, in late September thousands upon thousands of Albertans gathered in front of this Legislature to drive home the message that it's urgent for our province to take action on climate change. They left their schools, their universities, their jobs and businesses to come and deliver that message to this government. Will the minister of environment pursue action on climate change with the same enthusiasm that he pursued a \$4.5 billion giveaway to big corporations?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we are pursuing action on climate change. We're excited to unveil the TIER program in a few weeks. We'll have more to say about that at the time, but what I can tell you is that our approach in this government when it comes to climate change will be very different than that hon. member's approach when he was part of the government formerly. We will not focus on taxing hard-working hockey moms, hockey dads, and Albertans with no results, admitted to by their own leader. The NDP leader admitted that their program had no impact on climate change. We'll focus on the TIER program, technology and innovation, and working hand in hand with the great innovators across our entire province to actually tackle this problem.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, the member opposite of course knows what it's like to give away \$4.5 billion and achieve no results.

Given that the only response from this government to this large gathering of Albertans was a display of some signs in office windows intended to troll the protestors and given that the role of government is to lead and listen to Albertans, to the minister of the environment: was this a government-sanctioned message, or was it just the work of some juvenile staffers?

The Speaker: I might just remind all members of the Assembly that after question 4 there is no requirement for preambles.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we're proud to be part of a government that supports our oil and gas industry. I know that the hon. member is part of a party that does not, but we do. What I would really like to ask the hon. member is why he was part of a government that brought in the carbon tax and then sat on his hands while it hurt everyday Albertans. Right in my own constituency a place you know well, the West Country seniors' centre, almost had to shut while these hon. members sat inside this Legislature. Every time that we brought it up in opposition, they would laugh. They didn't care. They would continue with the job-killing carbon tax. Let me be clear. That's not our approach. We're looking forward to bringing in TIER, and we will work to actually tackle this problem.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that many of the people who gathered outside the Legislature were schoolchildren, university students, and other young Albertans and given that we know that this government makes plenty of time to break bread with big corporations benefiting from their corporate handout but couldn't bother to send a single representative outside to the steps of the Legislature to meet with the people who wanted action on climate change, to the minister: how can these young people get your attention? Should they incorporate themselves?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the rally he's talking about that he and others attended was organized by Emma Jackson, who was involved in the illegal blockade of tankers transporting energy out of the port of Vancouver. The rally he's referring to had hammer and sickle flags. I would never attend a rally with a hammer and sickle flag any more than a swastika. The real question is: why was the NDP there?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Provincial Fiscal Policies (continued)

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In early September the MacKinnon panel showed that our province had a spending problem. Our province would have \$10.4 billion more if we matched the average spending of Canada's three largest provinces. In the last four years, since the previous NDP socialist government got elected in 2015, Alberta's debt kept soaring from \$13 billion to an astonishing \$60 billion. To the Minister of Finance: how is our government going to reduce the overspending problem our province has, caused by the previous NDP socialist government? [interjections]

The Speaker: We will have order.
The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We did inherit an out-of-control spending regime when we took office on this side of the House. We will chart a new

course. We will introduce a budget that restrains spending. We will introduce a budget that brings us to balance within our first term. We will stop wasting taxpayers' dollars, and we will continue to deliver high-quality services.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government got our province deeply into debt and given that Albertans still want good-quality services such as education and health care and given that our government needs to find ways to change the way we spend, to the same minister: how will you prioritize the budget to give Albertans good-quality services while still managing the previous government's spending problem?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that good question. We were clear in our platform that we're committed to delivering high-quality services for Albertans. The MacKinnon panel report conclusion that this province spends \$10.4 billion more than the other three large provinces in this nation was a compelling statistic. That tells me that we have room to find efficiencies, remove redundancies, and find new ways to deliver better to Albertans, at the same time bringing fiscal responsibility to the budget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the MacKinnon panel said that our provincial outcomes from our spending are worse than the outcomes of other provinces and given that they also said that raising taxes is not the answer to controlling the previous government's overspending problem and given that they also advised us to act quickly and decisively to reduce our spending, to the same minister: how will your ministry act quickly and decisively to reduce spending while improving outcomes for Albertans?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The MacKinnon panel was very clear: we need to get our spending under control. The fact that we're spending \$10.4 billion more annually than the other provinces is actually a compelling statistic. Dr. Janice MacKinnon, the chair of the blue-ribbon panel, was very clear. Dr. MacKinnon's advice to me was this: you as a province have options right now to make some very clear decisions on your path forward; make those decisions today and do not delay because within four years, if you delay, you will have very few options. We will deliver.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross has risen.

2:40

Registry Services

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of the summer tour by the Minister of Service Alberta was focused on the Alberta registry system and the issues facing Alberta registry agents. I have heard the minister say that almost all Albertans deal with registries, whether it's to register a birth or death, apply for a driver's licence, register a business, or obtain some other important service. My constituency, like many in the province, contains registry offices. Can the minister tell us what assurance he has provided to the registry agents concerning their issues?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and new father.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you that my wife did all the hard work, but I'm very happy to welcome my son on September 5.

I just want to say thank you to the member for bringing this up. I want to just say that what I told on my tour, what I told the registry offices is that we appreciate the hard work that they provide delivering very vital government services to Albertans all across this province and that this government will work collaboratively with them and not in competition with them, unlike the members on the other side of this aisle. Instead of taking services away from them and competing with them, we will work with them on a path forward to delivering vital services to Albertans.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Congratulations on all the hard work.

Given that I have heard a lot of chatter around modernizing services that registries provide and given that in many cases both Albertans and registry agents alike have been waiting to see some modernization of those services, can the Minister of Service Alberta tell us what type of modernization registry agents and Albertans can expect in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the question. One of the things that surprised me the most when I inherited this file earlier this year was to learn that Alberta is last in the country in terms of online service delivery and modern service delivery for registry services. That is unacceptable, and it is a failing of the members on the other side of this aisle for how they handled the registry file and how they competed with private registries and took services away from them, thereby turning those registries into an unviable business model so they would not invest in modernizing their services. That stops now. We will work in collaboration with registries.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that rural registries and urban registries provide the same services but play very different roles in their communities and given that Albertans are looking for more ways to get things done online as opposed to waiting in endless lineups and given that rural communities rely far more heavily on the registry offices as opposed to their urban counterparts, how can the minister be sure that modernizing registry services won't result in the closure of rural offices?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you that on my tour I visited 36 communities in nine days, driving over 4,000 kilometres to meet with folks in their home communities to talk about these issues and to listen to their challenges and concerns and to discuss opportunities on how we can move forward on ensuring that Albertans get the best services possible from their registry network. I want to assure those rural registries that we value their services, and we certainly will work in collaboration with them as we work to modernize service delivery models, and that their bricks and mortar locations will not disappear as a result of our actions on the modernization file.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed to the presenting of petitions, I just beg your indulgence for one brief moment, and please accept my apologies. Earlier I missed an introduction of the Jakeway family, who are guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. My apologies, and thank you for your indulgence.

In 30 seconds or less we will move on with the rest of the daily Routine.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and the Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Government Motion 33.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce the federal government's decision to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to the Canadian Armed Forces members, call on the federal government to immediately reverse this decision and provide the highest level of treatment for these members, and recognize the contribution of these members, who bravely and willingly risk their lives for our country.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen.

Bill 15

Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 15, the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019.

The Real Estate Council of Alberta has failed to provide effective governance and oversight of the real estate industry. This bill includes amendments to dismiss the current members of council and enable the appointment of an administrator to govern RECA on an interim basis. Our focus with this bill is to protect the overall operations of the council and its critically important role and to restore Albertans' trust in the real estate regulator.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, which I quoted earlier today in the discussion on Bill 14.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an article from the *Independent*, *Climate Crisis: CO₂ Levels Rise to Highest Point Since Evolution of Humans*.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a document entitled "How Dare You?" Read

Greta Thunberg's Emotional Climate Change Speech to UN and World Leaders.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings today?

Hon. members, there are no points of order today, which I'm sure is a shame for all of you. As such, we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has caught my eye.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) in order to proceed immediately to debate on Government Motion 33.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order

2:50

Bill 14

Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I rise in support of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. This UCP government knows that the indigenous people of Alberta and across Canada are important and have played a critical role in Canadian history. While we cannot change the wrongdoings of our past, we can embark upon a path of reconciliation with indigenous communities through opportunities and partnership.

This UCP government set a mandate that we intend to follow through on, and, Madam Chair, I think that we have done a good job since Albertans elected us a short five months ago. We were tasked with creating opportunities for the men and women in our industry sectors, proving that Alberta is open for business, and welcoming new stakeholders to the table to invest in our great province.

This bill underscores the absolute need to include indigenous communities in that development. For too long our indigenous leaders and communities have been neglected. Madam Chair, this UCP government says that enough is enough. We want to empower indigenous groups to engage in our industry sectors, to invest in our resources, and to partner with this government. Alberta creates opportunity for so many through jobs and innovation. Bill 14 helps to ensure that those same opportunities are extended to indigenous groups, who simply want and deserve to be given the same opportunities as everyone else. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will give indigenous communities more power over the resources found on their land.

This government wants to partner with indigenous communities to build on their economic and social well-being. It is clear that indigenous leaders in Alberta are ready for responsible government and partnership, and the UCP government is committing to partnering with our First Nations through this bill. We have learned from our past. We know that history should never repeat itself, and the indigenous people of Alberta need a voice. Bill 14 is that voice.

Alberta is a trailblazer with this piece of legislation, and by ensuring that indigenous communities are equal partners at the table when we talk about our economy and our industry sectors, we give the impression that this is not simply a handout but that they are equal partners.

Unemployment in indigenous communities is high, and we have an opportunity to create stable and well-earned jobs for all members in our natural resource sector. At the same time, we are growing our economy and helping all Albertans contribute to our strong economic future. This government was elected to get Alberta back on track and get things done. We are standing up for our energy sectors, we are standing with indigenous communities, and we are standing up for Alberta.

Indigenous people are stewards of the land. Alberta is full of natural resources. That all Albertans benefit from an economic and social construct – indigenous communities were the first to live off our land, to protect the land and its natural resources, and to benefit from the resources it provides. With Bill 14 indigenous communities will have the ability to develop those natural resources, and this government is partnering with those communities to make this happen.

This government is doing that in a number of ways. We're allocating \$1 billion in loan guarantees for indigenous communities. This funding for indigenous communities will help raise the desperately needed capital to develop and profit from the resources extracted that lie below the land of their ancestors.

We see the impact of the wrongdoings in history on our reserves, and we have listened to the needs of indigenous communities. Minister Wilson and his department and members of this government have consulted with close to 200 indigenous community leaders, industry leaders, and businessmen and -women, who were consulted to engage with our government on involvement in our industry sectors. Bill 14 is not only creating financial stability for indigenous communities, but we are strengthening relationships with indigenous leaders and communities, something that has long been neglected.

Albertans want jobs, Albertans want responsible government, and Albertans want a government that builds relationships instead of tearing them apart. They want a government that'll listen to them, and, Madam Chair, I will continue to listen to my constituents and the great people of this province and support those initiatives that do just that.

Madam Chair, our indigenous peoples have suffered as a result of the neglect and mistreatment of the governments in this country. Residential schools, the '60s scoop, and most recently the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women are all examples of the neglect and mistreatment that the indigenous people of this province have suffered. We can begin to reconcile and mend in one small way some of the damage caused, by standing behind and supporting this bill. I am proud to stand in support of this bill, which I believe is one clear step in the right direction to mending the damage caused in the indigenous communities of this province.

This bill will create a strong future for indigenous men, women, and children, and it will do so by ensuring that they're included in our resource industry, that access to capital is available, and that every opportunity to prosperity is opened. This UCP government will continue to stand up for their right to participate in resource development. I have met with my constituents, listened to their concerns, and I believe that this government is acting on their concerns with the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. We are not overlooking the indigenous brothers and sisters in this province; we are standing with them and creating a strong partnership that will lead to prosperity for current and future generations, for all Albertans. We must look to the future, and this UCP government wants Alberta to continue to thrive for generations to come.

With this initiative indigenous youth and children will have more opportunities to invest in their province, in the natural resources that their ancestors protected, lived off, and cared for. I stand here supporting this legislation, and I am honoured to be representing my constituents in a government that is fighting for all Albertans. We will continue to promote indigenous economic opportunities in Alberta and respect the voice of indigenous leaders. We have engaged them in our natural resource sectors, and we will continue to engage them. We will not stop.

Bill 14 was introduced at the beginning of the fall session because, I believe, we are prioritizing our indigenous communities. The UCP government is working for all Albertans and defending the promises we made to voters in the last election. We are improving the lives of all Albertans and stabilizing our economic future. Indigenous communities have an opportunity to invest in major resource developments, projects that are constructed on indigenous land. Historically, the indigenous people of Alberta have had to fight for their voice, their rights, and their land. Bill 14 and the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation set the stage for a positive partnership with indigenous groups and government in this province, one that will last for many years to come.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? Comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The goal of this act, really, is to work in a very positive and truly empowering way with our indigenous peoples in this province, really by means of providing increased capital and tech support so that there can be investment and ownership of natural resources and projects related to the infrastructure with that in a shared partnership with our province.

3:00

The act does a number of things. Section 2(1): it actually creates the indigenous opportunities corporation as an arm's-length Crown corporation. It also lays out a mandate for that corporation in 2(2), which is to "facilitate investment by indigenous groups in natural resource projects and related infrastructure, subject to the regulations" that are there. It both creates and lays out the direction. It will appoint a board of directors to manage it. It will define who might participate in all of that, indigenous groups. I'm pleased to see that it's a broad definition that includes traditional indigenous people but also Métis people and, beyond that, even the organizations that they own and control so that there can be no limits on their ability to participate.

It will also define some of the financial mechanisms that the Crown corporation may use in order to benefit them and provide the kinds of financial resources that will be useful and helpful. I think it's a great act, and I truly encourage all members to support the intent of it and to work through the details of it, because I think it is important that we go in this direction.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Stephen Buffalo. He's actually originally from Maskwacis, which borders on the north side of my riding, and I had a good visit with him. He is currently the president and CEO of the Indian Resource Council of Canada. His father, actually, used to be chief of his band in Maskwacis. He's well connected there. He knows the people, he knows their situation, and he's very frustrated, actually, with the endless politics in Canada with regard to aboriginal engagement in the economy and ability to participate and the fact that there's endless politics but no action. Nothing ever happens. Nothing ever changes.

We talked a little bit about that and some of the frustration with it. He's working together with some of the other chiefs that were there in a joint effort to draw together much support for this bill. He is in support of the bill and very clear about that. He actually said to me – and this was a phrase that really caught my ear when he spoke to me. He said that some of us have profited a lot from this industry. You know, the thing that matters there is that he wants and I want and our government want to see that kind of reality, that kind of ability to say that he's prospered, and for all the rest of his people as well, not just him. He wants to see his people also benefit from the resources of this land, from the resources that they live on and are part of.

Personally, I've never really understood why the feds keep bands in what I call a matrix of legislated poverty. I think it's time that we pressure the federal government to change some of that, and the reality is that our government hopes to actually change some of that, within the limits of our ability here at the provincial level, to truly make a difference for our aboriginal people.

I also had a bit of a visit yesterday with Calvin Helin. He's chairman and president of Eagle Spirit Energy Holdings, the group that seeks to build the Eagle Spirit pipeline across northern Alberta and B.C. to – what is it? – Grassy Point, B.C., in order to export natural resources product so that the aboriginal peoples of our province, really of all of western Canada, will be able to profit from that, will be able to prosper from it as well. One of the comments he made to me about this was that they have actually already been engaging with the state of Alaska. He said to me: you know, the state of Alaska has rolled out the red carpet for us. They would actually be very happy and very supportive of us regulatorywise, even with some funding potentially, if they would change the route of their pipeline a little bit and bring it to Alaska instead of to British Columbia.

If we continue with the federal policies that we currently have, what we're going to see here, again, is more of our wealth, more of our prosperity going to the U.S. because the federal government blockades and prevents Canadians from developing our western resources. Here Mr. Calvin Helin is clear that the Americans in Alaska are more than willing to welcome them and help them and provide it. He says that if we can't get it in British Columbia, we're going to Alaska with it.

I think we need to be aware of these kinds of opportunities and the fact that our indigenous people really do want to be able to participate in the industry, participate in the benefits from it, participate in the prosperity. By this act we really do hope to enhance the prosperity by means of access to participation in the economy in real partnership, in a new future for our indigenous peoples and our relationship together with them. I think this is important because, quite frankly, when indigenous peoples are strong, Alberta is strong, and together as partners we can continue to make Alberta the economic engine of the country. We can continue to make the indigenous peoples in Alberta the most prosperous in Canada and, hopefully, set a pattern and an example for other provinces and for the federal government as well.

With partnership and ownership come jobs, freedom of destiny, education, skills, social well-being, self-respect, and honour. I think that's something we would want to see for all Albertans. Our government, with this bill, is moving beyond vacuous symbolic gestures to real action, to actually engaging and creating the kinds of structures that will change the future and change the relationship and make it better. As has already been said, we have a moral obligation to put money on the barrelhead, and this bill is a step in the right direction. We truly do need to support this bill.

I'm pleased to see in the details of the bill, as I sort of already mentioned, a broad definition of indigenous groups so that we

include everyone and not just some of them, so that there's no discrimination there. Everyone is entitled to be part of this. I think this is a bill of real importance. Indigenous groups have in the past been disqualified from participation in the economy because of legal structures that prevent indigenous groups from providing the financial guarantees needed to satisfy lending institutions. Therefore, it ends up in a refusal of funding for viable projects that could support their bands, that could prosper their people, that could benefit them in so many social kinds of ways. This bill is a strong step in resolving some of that. By this bill, we actually backstop indigenous groups, and I think it's a small step to fix that structural problem, that is such a barrier. In that regard, this bill really is an act of social justice, so I think it's extremely important that we fix it.

I think I would appreciate hearing the minister's comments, since in Committee of the Whole we can have some of this back and forth, with regard to that aspect of the financial backstop and the social justice element that it may carry with it.

The second thing I think I would like to hear from the minister on, if possible, is if he would be able to share with this House some of the comments from consultations that have happened. I know that he was involved in significant consultations, and I think that's important, so I would appreciate it if he would be able to share some of those comments with the House that have evolved out of those consultations.

Clearly, just in closing, I'd like to say that indigenous nations are deeply committed to the land, the air, and the water. They have always prospered by harvesting the natural resources of the land, whether it's game for meat or furs and clothing, whether it's plants for food or medicines or even to build their homes, even the tars of the Athabasca region. All of these things were part of their economy and trade from way back. The fact that the majority of the bands are actually in support of our resources is a strong statement about how clean and how sustainable our natural resource energy is. The reality is that they just want in. They want to be able to participate. They want to be part of the prosperity. They want real work. They want honour.

3:10

I think the issue here is that we really do need to understand that resources can be environmentally safe. That's what some of the indigenous leaders are telling us, that they can be without harm to the environment. They want to make sure that that, in fact, is the case, and I think it's just extremely concerning that some groups have come into Canada and tried to sway that, sometimes even by payment of money, to basically continue to leave our indigenous groups out of the circle of prosperity in this province. This bill allows the opportunity for them to engage in ways that have never been possible before. It is historic, it is a landmark bill, and I encourage all members to support it. I look forward to any comments the minister might be able to make in response to my couple of questions.

Thank you.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I think the basic problem – and I've been here and listened to all 10 or so of the members of the UCP government talk about this bill, and I've taken some notes in terms of their words and what they're saying. My view is that this bill is short on detail, and I think it's led to many of the members of the UCP government talking about this bill in not-specific language.

I'm going to support what we have before us because I think it's a good initial start, but really the devil will be in the details. You

can see that under section 2(12) “the Minister may make regulations,” and then it goes on to identify all of the things that the minister can do.

I've listened to many UCP members talk about how important this is to give opportunity to First Nation peoples and Métis peoples. I've heard some talk about the awards in their community and how a First Nation individual got an award and that they never did before, and I heard people talk about how 190 individuals and groups – and some have talked about what those were – were involved in the formation of this initiative. You know, that should be standard, and it was standard operating procedure for the government that I was part of. Engagement is happening. That's great. Engagement happened with us.

I heard one person talk at length about the dignity of work and then ask another member back there: what do you think? And he said: well, you answered it, so I don't have to say anything. My point is that not a lot was focused on this bill.

Another person mentioned that the Fort McKay individual average after-tax income was \$73,000, and I'm very happy to hear that. It was double the Canadian average and \$17,000 higher than the average Albertan's. It really speaks to the presence of the natural resources and the involvement of the Fort McKay band in the Suncor oil sands storage north of Fort McMurray, their involvement as an owner in that project, that investment.

I heard lots of people talk about, you know, partnerships. No one disagrees with partnerships. That's a good thing.

There were some veiled kinds of discussions about a hand up and a handout, but no one ever talked about what the handout was or, you know, the implication of who was giving the handouts.

Then there was a statement just a second ago about vacuous symbolic gestures to First Nations and Métis peoples but no identification of what those gestures were.

I'd certainly agree that when all Albertans are strong, this province is stronger. I certainly believe in that. But, you know, I heard a lot of backslapping and congratulating the minister and the Premier and every other person in the province for this bill. Don't gloss over the significant challenges there are in the economic and social disparities in this province that affect First Nations communities and Métis peoples, and that was recognized by our government. We worked very hard to bring clean drinking water to reserves, the boundary reserves, we worked very hard to ensure child care was more readily available, and we worked very hard to support people off-reserve with income supports and other things, education, and to index those. Is there more to do? There's always more to do, Madam Chair, but don't denigrate what's been done before to provide the supports that people have needed. Think of our work as providing a foundation and your work as building on that foundation.

I think the idea of loan guarantees is a really good one. I think my colleague from Calgary-McCall did a wonderful job outlining the monumental disparities and how we first tried to address those. I think everyone in this Chamber wants the same thing for all Albertans. We want Albertans to do well always. Our approach included an economic focus as well as a social focus. It'd be incredibly unfortunate if the UCP unwound the important social gains that were made in this province, as I said – water to reserves, income supports, green energy initiatives – and I'm concerned that that's going to happen because of your focus on this bill and believing that nothing else has to be done. I think we can do both. I think we can ensure that individuals and families in First Nations communities and Métis communities have the necessities they need to survive and do well, so the social framework needs to be in place for them and the economic framework you're proposing about

guaranteeing loans to First Nation and Métis businesses to be involved in the natural resource sector. That's a good thing.

We were focused on taking direct action to reduce poverty, improve education, improve the mental health and physical health outcomes of First Nations and Métis peoples, and that can't be unwound in the service of Bill 14. It can complement Bill 14.

Madam Chair, I don't need to take up a great deal of time to go on, but I do believe that we have some amendments coming, that the corporation that we're talking about is a good step that builds on previous steps of the NDP government. The fact that there's not a lot in this bill is something that I think we need to be very cautious about, that the regulation-setting process will be important. I'll be watching for those.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Now for something positive. I'd just like to take this opportunity and thank the minister for bringing Bill 14 forward and for reacting so quickly to a much-needed need in our Alberta society. It would have been very easy to, you know, as previous governments, just form another committee and kick the can down the road for another year or two years, but it is very, very important.

As you may know – some of you may know – while we were in opposition, I had many opportunities to visit a lot of the First Nations and Métis settlements around the province, and I did get a very consistent message from everyone. That was that they did want opportunities. They wanted to work with the government to lift themselves out of poverty and into prosperity. Many of the First Nations groups that I've talked to were surrounded by forestry and oil and gas. One of the chiefs actually asked me: "Well, why would I sign on to a pipeline? There's no benefit to my community." This is why Bill 14 is so important. We get opportunities to those folks because they cannot – you know, one of the major messages that I got from them constantly was lack of access to capital.

I talked to an entrepreneur that was a businessman that lived on one of the Métis settlements and had a beautiful home. Anywhere else in the province you would have been able to leverage that home for half a million dollars to bolster a business or start up a business, but he says: this house is actually worth zero in the eyes of any bank. That's why this is also very important. But we go back a long way, and you know what? I'm going to talk about some of the success stories from my region because we do have a lot of them. We've been surrounded by oil and gas for, you know, 50, 60 years up there. Some of the folks up there have taken advantage of that, seen the opportunity, and rather than fight the oil and gas exploration and development, they saw it as an opportunity to develop and expand their own.

3:20

I'm going to read for you from Goodfish Lake business corporation. If you go to their website, right on there it says: "Aboriginal owned, proudly Canadian." I think that's a very, very strong statement from those folks. I'm going to read to you their mission statement. It goes like this. It says, "Living the vision set by Chief Sam Bull and Council in 1977 to build a strong economic foundation that creates prosperity, employment for aboriginal people and protects the environment." Back as early as 1977 these folks saw the need for their communities, they saw the advantages that were available through the oil and gas industry, and they acted on it. That company started with a dry cleaning business to clean oil field clothing. I believe that just a few years ago they built a new 17,000-square-foot facility. They're actually producing these

garments, fire-retardant coveralls, for Suncor and Syncrude and also continuing with the repairs of the coveralls and the dry cleaning process. That's a big success story that's been going on up in my area for very many years.

Also, the frustration. I can give you another example of that, where an entrepreneur at I believe it was Cold Lake First Nation formed a company to insulate piping products. She applied and was successful at bidding on a project, won the bid, and unfortunately had to come back to the oil company and say: "You know what? I'm not going to be able to do this because I can't get the financing to buy the product. Like, we have the people lined up. Everybody is trained. We've gone through all the training, but we just can't seem to finance this thing." The oil company stepped in and actually financed that project for them and got them off the ground. They've become quite successful in that.

You know, you get up into that Bonnyville area, and you've got companies like Primco Dene that have been operating for many years up there employing – I believe it's about 70 per cent of their employees that are their own First Nations and Métis people from up in that area. Seven Lakes Oilfield is another one. They provide all kinds of services to the construction industry, to the oil and gas industry up there.

Bill 14 is just another step. A lot of those companies have access to funds through the First Nations development fund, which has provided some of that backing, but we really need to step in and help out. There are a lot of entrepreneurs out there. They've got some great ideas, and it's just the lack of access to capital that's really holding them back. I really thank the minister for acting so quickly on this. It was something that we heard over the last few years. I'm very happy to see that it came forward so quickly. Like I said, you know, entrepreneurs out in that area are being held back just simply by lack of funding. Bill 14: if they come forward with some properly good business plans and do the right applications, I think we can really help out. I look forward to seeing some very successful indigenous projects in the future up in my area.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to thank all hon. members for all of your positive comments. It's been a pleasure for me to speak again to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. It's been a rare occasion to hear so much agreement in this Chamber, which gives me a lot of hope for the future. I truly believe we all come from a place of acknowledging that the current path for indigenous economic development needs to be steered onto safer ground. I also believe that we share a commitment to be people who take on the responsibility and privilege of working with indigenous communities to clear that path because it's within our means to do so.

Since tabling the legislation on Tuesday, I've received incredible support from within this Chamber – I thank you for that – and from indigenous communities, industry, and government officials. More importantly, the reaction from ordinary, average Albertans has been overwhelmingly positive, and to see such incredible, positive feedback on this legislation from the people that got us here is a great benchmark for us. To the people of Alberta: I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

It seems we all have agreement on this bill, and it will move the province forward. Enabling legislation will create the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation as a Crown corporation of Alberta, or public agency, as we all call them in this province. Through the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation we will

increase indigenous communities' access to capital and technical support to invest in natural resource projects and related infrastructure.

I would have liked to have had all of the leaders at our press conference because there is so much support, but of the ones that were there, the words spoken yesterday by Chief Joseph Weasel Child from the Siksika Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy were, and I quote: I've never seen this type of commitment by a government anywhere, particularly within the province of Alberta.

Stephen Buffalo, as was mentioned earlier, the president and CEO of the Indian Resource Council, said: we now have a government that is willing to work with the First Nations and has created this opportunity for us.

The president of the Métis settlements association, Herb Lehr – and I hear this from him all the time – said: we want a hand up, not a handout. That's where it comes from. I sit and talk with him. He often talks of the pride that comes with having a good job. He says: that's all we're looking for; we want to have pride in what we do.

I want to finish by thanking everyone in the House for their support of this game-changing bill and especially acknowledge the Premier for his unwavering leadership on this file. To my colleagues, all of you: thank you for your statements of support. To the opposition members: I welcome your suggestions and support as well since we all realize that this is a good-news bill that benefits all of Alberta.

It's been a wonderful, crazy, stressful, and rewarding 24 hours, and it's been great. The work that we're accomplishing has been very rewarding, every second of it, and I thank you all.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak about this. I do have a few different things, so I'm sure I'll be rising a number of times during our committee time together.

I think that the first thing I'd like to do is just offer support for this bill, in that in my tours of the province of Alberta for the three years that I had the privilege to be Minister of Indigenous Relations, I did hear many of the same things about people wanting an opportunity to succeed and, of course, heard about the many structural barriers that prevented indigenous communities from being successful, as the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka indicated. In many ways the laws and structures of Canada and Alberta have been in the way of successful economic development in indigenous communities, so I'm glad to see that we share that philosophy.

I was a little concerned yesterday when the Member for Peace River stood up to indicate that somehow talking about the structural barriers that have occurred and the oppression that has occurred in the province over the last year somehow is identity politics and that somehow we victimize the indigenous community by acknowledging the truth. I'm just glad to know that he is isolated even within the UCP party, that all the rest of the speakers I have heard have talked about the fact that indeed there are structural barriers, and perhaps they can take a little bit of time to bring the Member for Peace River up to speed. I'd appreciate him doing that.

I do get concerned when I hear some of the members refer to the things that have been done in the past as somehow being less important than the work that's being done today. I want to validate the work that's being done today because I think that it is very important. You know, we often hear them say things like, "Well, things that have been done in the past have been handouts to the indigenous community," which I think is a fairly insulting term. If you actually say, "We're going to be providing you actual resources in order to improve your life," that somehow that's a handout, as if,

"You don't really deserve it, but from the goodness of our hearts we're going to give you a small, little pittance" – it's pretty insulting language, so I'd ask you to be a bit more respectful about talking about that in the House if you truly do want to see success in the indigenous community.

I notice that they also often make comments that somehow the work of previous governments – ours, of course, being the only non-Conservative government in the history of the province of Alberta – and the things that we did were symbolic gestures. Again, I'm not quite sure why, when you're introducing a bill with a positive intent like this, you would refer to the work that the indigenous community has done to educate us and to ask us to do various things in order to improve the lives of indigenous people, why you would refer to those requests by the indigenous community as somehow shallow or hollow symbolic gestures. I'm not quite sure why you feel the need to denigrate the work that the indigenous community has done up until this time. I just want to ask you to reconsider some of the language that you're using if indeed you are seeking to work with the indigenous community.

3:30

Just to accentuate that point just a little bit, I'd like to talk about some of the things that were actually created in co-operation with the indigenous community over the last four years. Many of you will know that when we first came into government, we took the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and adopted that, the first provincial government in the country of Canada, including the federal and provincial governments, to actually adopt the United Nations declaration and say that we accept it and that we will work very hard to enact it. We took that document and provided it to every single ministry that these ministers represent and said to them: would you please look at this document and then look at the rules and regulations and practices of your ministry and tell us where we are not in line with that? We also gave that same document to the community partners: Treaty 6, Treaty 7, Treaty 8, Métis Nation of Alberta, the Metis Settlements General Council, the friendship centre society of Alberta, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. All of these partners also read that same document and came to us with incredibly important suggestions, which I really don't want denigrated by this government as it talks about the good work it's about to do because that work was good, too. That work was done with deep consultation with the indigenous communities, who provided us with hundreds of pages of documents and suggestions about how to move forward.

As a result, some very important, incredible things happened in the last four years, which I deeply hope that this Minister of Indigenous Relations and, of course, all of the members of the United Conservative Party will continue to support. I think the most obvious one, mentioned previously by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, was that we were the very first and to date, I understand, the only provincial government to actually take specific action on the lack of clean water on First Nations. We were the only provincial government that said: "We're not just going to talk about it. We're going to actually build pipes to the reserves. Even though we can't build on the reserves – the federal government has to do that – we are going to build the pipes to the reserves." We informed the federal government that we were going to be doing that, and that forced their hand. As a result, every time we built a pipe – for example, to the Alexis reserve, to Paul band, to Cold Lake, to Whitefish (Goodfish), all of these reserves – the federal government has stepped up and provided extra money.

Because we took positive, real action, not empty gestures but real action, we were actually able to leverage more money out of the

federal government for the people of Alberta. That came out of suggestions that were given to us when we took the United Nations declaration and used it as a common dialogue focus between the government and indigenous people across this province. That's not a hollow gesture. That is practical change in real life. As a result of having clean drinking water, the likelihood of people being more successful economically rises. They can do things like, as mentioned by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, laundry facilities for the oil and gas areas.

I also want to mention just a few of the other things that we've done because they're not empty gestures. They're important things that were specifically asked for by indigenous communities. I'm very proud to say that of the things that came together, we identified a number of things, and we took immediate action. In the three years that I was minister, we were able to fulfill more than 14 of them, and they're not small, trivial things. They're big things.

I would just like to mention some of the things that we've done. As well as the talking things like, of course, the protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy, which we originally designed and signed and is now being reinforced by the present minister, we also did one with the Métis Nation of Alberta and one with Treaty 8. Those talking things we did because they're very important, because it was a response to the request by members of the indigenous community to begin to recognize them as nations, nations which have the ability and the desire to define and control the implementation of governance in their own communities. That is more than a hollow gesture. That's a practical acknowledgement of the reality that the people we're talking about are indeed people who have a right to that level of self-governance, just as you and I do. I think that to denigrate that is a mistake, so I think you should be cautious about that.

Beyond those kind of talking things there were also very specific choices that we made. We were one of the first provinces, for example, to adopt Jordan's principle, in which we define the right for people to have access to adequate health care and that we will proceed with a provision of appropriate health care without resorting to interjurisdictional quibbling about who pays for that health care, a very important principle that has resulted in First Nations communities actually improving their lives through direct and uninhibited access to health care. That's an important thing that we did.

We've also done hundreds, literally hundreds, and I could stand here all day and will, if necessary, to convince you that there are hundreds of very specific programs that have changed people's lives. I can talk about, for example, the creation of maternal health care programs. Maskwacis has been mentioned a number of times, and we've designed a maternal health care program that's actually helping to train and to provide services in the Maskwacis community with a particular priority on midwifery. That's a practical change that's going to help us to deal with the fact that indigenous people are overrepresented in terms of infant mortality, and we're going to deal with that. That's keeping people alive. That's not a gesture. That's a practical, important change.

We can talk about the fact that we've also created opportunities for indigenous communities to have a very specific and direct say over the land in this province. For example, we increased the amount of money available for First Nations communities with regard to oil and gas and other kinds of resource development from \$7 million to \$27 million, because when I went around, they said: we want to be able to speak to those kind of programs, those kind of businesses that are going to be doing something to our land so that we can talk about how that's going to affect us and we can actually make decisions about the appropriate style and nature of the development of those resources. We gave them practical, real

money and opportunity. We spent two years in consultation with businesses, with municipalities, and with First Nations to talk about changes to the consultation arrangements under the ACO, Alberta's organization for consultation.

I think it's very important that this bill be seen as an adjunct to that, as adding to the work that we already did to give more voice to indigenous people in this province, something that I think we all can agree on. I just don't think that you should be taking away from the work that the indigenous community has already done in order to create those kinds of opportunities for consultation and so on.

I also want to point out, for example, that we created the very first Métis settlement consultation plan and the off-settlement consultation plan, which never existed in this province before. We created those opportunities to talk about resource development and to speak about how they're affecting the lands on which the indigenous people are living. I'm hoping that you're going to continue that work. I'm hoping that you're going to expand that work and improve on the first piece that we were able to put together in the time that we were in office.

3:40

I'm also pleased to talk about the fact that we worked with indigenous communities to create control over the land in terms of our development of parks such as the Castle park, where we sat down with the Piikani First Nation and said, "We are going to put you in a place of comanagement, and you're going to help us in this co-operative management style to actually decide what's going to be happening in this newly preserved, protected, piece of land," which is something, again, that the First Nations people have asked us. We created five new parks in the northern part of Alberta close to the oil sands development because we worked co-operatively with oil sands developers and First Nations such as Tallcree, which had a piece of land in the area, and we got agreement among all of the parties – the government, the industry, and the First Nations – to switch some land around so that we could create these five parks and to develop a co-operative management process in which the First Nations were able to speak to healthy, positive development of our natural resources.

These are the kinds of things that I think that we have to be careful not to say were not done in the past. Indeed they were done, and if I continue to hear people saying that nothing has been done in the past, I'm going to continue to stand up and read off more of these. I literally have a list of over 300 of them, and I'm more than prepared to teach you all about all these things. I do understand that, you know, many of you are new in this House and don't have that depth of knowledge of the work that's been done with the indigenous community. I appreciate the struggles of being a neophyte in an area and needing a little bit of instruction. I certainly received much instruction myself as I became Minister of Indigenous Relations. I look forward to providing you more lessons about the work that has been done in the past.

Now, I want to move on a little bit more to some of the particular choices that have been made in this bill. As we have said, we absolutely want to support this bill, but we think there is room for some improvement. One of the things that provides me with some concern is the number of times in the bill that there is reference to the fact that decisions will be made subject to regulations. I can tell you that in terms of the establishment of a corporation, the mandate of the corporation is subject to regulation, that the carrying out of the mandate or making grants or contributions is subject to regulation, section 2(6), that the establishment of a board is subject to regulation, that the minister can make regulations respecting natural resource projects; that is, the type of projects. Not the indigenous people but the minister will decide whether a project fits or doesn't fit, whether it's in or not.

Now, you started by saying that you actually talked to indigenous people and you wanted to give them a voice, and then you write into the bill that they don't have a choice in what kind of a project fits your contributions or not. I'm very concerned. You know, I've spent a lot of time working with people across the province, talking about the types of things that they'd liked to do, and certainly resource development is one of them, but it's not the only thing. So, as a result, I think that we need to take a little bit of time to have a conversation about why it is limited only to resource development here.

I would like to propose an amendment at this time, and then I will speak to that. I will provide an original and copies for everyone. I'll wait.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1. Hon. member, you have about two minutes and 50 seconds left.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I will read the body of the amendment here: that Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, be amended in section 2(2) by striking out "in natural resource projects and related infrastructure."

I will just introduce this as a concept at this point because I think there are a number of MLAs who would like to speak to why we would like to see indigenous people be able to be successful in areas besides resource development. I'll just give one quick example before I allow other people an opportunity to speak to this, and then, of course, I will stand up and speak to it later in great length.

One example I'd just like to mention is that I've had the opportunity through our Métis and First Nations women's advisory council to speak to many entrepreneurial women. We have made sure that they have a voice in government by bringing them onto this council, by having them create proposals for government action and taking specific actions on that.

Through that, I also had the real privilege of meeting some incredible human beings who have done marvellous things in their own communities, I mean, people that have been active every single day to bring value and positive joy into their communities. One of those people is a woman by the name of Carrie Langevin, who started a company called Mother Earth Essentials. It's just an example but one that I'm just really proud to have seen. I went out to her shop, and I got the tour around, and we, in fact, held a press conference in her shop, trying to provide her with some support and our offer on the part of the government to actually support this kind of entrepreneurship. She was extremely successful.

In fact, you could look her up because she went to *Dragons' Den*, the television show, and she asked for their support to expand her services, and she received an offer to do that from a dragon. That tells you how successful this business was, that those very money-minded people were able to see that this was a well-run business with extreme potential. But I also want you to know that she turned them down. She said no at the end of the show. Do you want to know why? She told me later when I talked to her: because they wanted to control her business by taking too much of the shares. As a result, she went off on her own, and she's continued to be a successful entrepreneur. That's the kind of business I want to see more of.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this amendment to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I am quite pleased to hear that there is universal support within this House not only for the concept behind this bill but for indigenous peoples and supporting them and

making sure that they have every opportunity and even greater opportunities than they already have in this province.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I actually was very privileged to hear the former Minister of Indigenous Relations the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford speak about his experience travelling out to every First Nation and Métis settlement in this province, being the first minister to do so, but also speak about his experiences and what he's learned and what he tried to integrate into the work that he did when he was Minister of Indigenous Relations. I would actually be honoured to hear a little bit more about that. I especially took to heart his comments about the fact that when we're new to the House, as I am, we are neophytes and we are learning quite a bit.

Actually, I spent a little bit of time in my former life, before I became an MLA, working in Alberta Education, and I did a significant amount of work in First Nations education. That was working with the treaty areas, treaties 6, 7, and 8, the federal government, and working as a representative on behalf of the provincial government to improve opportunities for success for First Nation students in education. We know there are significant barriers to students, particularly those living on-reserve, because they don't have access to the same level of funding, professional development, the educational structures that we have, school boards. Things we take for granted didn't exist. Of course, the geographic disparity, being in small communities, northern communities, where it was often difficult to access a lot of those things, posed additional challenges.

That experience of working on those issues was an incredible learning experience, but more than anything it taught me how much more we all have to learn. It really is a respectful exercise in being quiet and listening to what indigenous communities and members and elders have to say about the needs of their community.

3:50

I very much take to heart this amendment because I think this amendment is really about saying: it is not the job of government to determine or predetermine how indigenous communities want to seek their economic development. It's a great idea. I, too, like my colleagues and everybody in this House, support the concept of the bill. I see this as an opportunity to improve it, to say: let's listen to the indigenous communities and let them determine how they would like to direct their economic development, provide the loan guarantees, provide those supports and those opportunities for capital investment for things that they need to do. But let's let them determine where they want to seek those opportunities and not limit them. We've seen that there are a lot of other supports that have been in place through government in the past and continue to be in place, and this is another great opportunity. But let's let them be the decision-makers of their economic future.

I really appreciate this amendment coming forward, and I appreciate the experience of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I look forward to hearing a little bit more about perhaps the projects and the work that he has done and why he thinks this would be a valuable amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I really do welcome the opportunity to speak about the phenomenal successes that already exist in the indigenous communities throughout this province and the incredible work that has been done to try to achieve success, against what I think are some phenomenal barriers.

For example, one of the stories that I heard, that I like to repeat when I talk to people in the community, is a little bit about the success of the Sawridge band, who, many of you would know, has created a series of hotels across the province of Alberta. Now I understand they're also in British Columbia, perhaps farther. I wouldn't be surprised. They're very successful.

I would like to tell you a little bit about the history of that and Walter Twinn, who went on to become a Senator in the country at the federal level, and what he had to do in order to create that business. At the time that he was wanting to establish a hotel in Slave Lake, a small hotel had come up for sale. I believe it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 rooms at the time. He wanted to buy it, but because of the laws of Canada, as a First Nations person he was not allowed to buy that hotel. This is not that long ago, by the way. This was, you know, in the 1970s.

What he had to do was take the money from the band and go to one of his nonindigenous friends and say: I'd like to give you this money, and I'd like you to buy that hotel, and then I will trust you to funnel that money back to the indigenous community. He had to absolutely, just on faith, find someone who would step in to do the legal, practical aspects so that he could run the hotel. Now, fortunately, he did find a very, incredibly decent human being who did exactly that and helped him to build an incredible set of hotels. Eventually, of course, the federal laws changed, and the band was able to more directly own those hotels.

I tell you that because I want to remind you that there have been serious structural barriers. It's not a lack of willingness on the part of indigenous people to participate in our economy; it's the fact that they have been prevented from participating in our economy. But one thing that's happening in this bill is that we're again creating a structural barrier for indigenous participation.

Now, it's different. Back in those days you weren't allowed to have a lawyer, so how could you possibly incorporate? So you can't run a business. These days it's: well, we're really interested in development of natural resources, which we actually define very narrowly as oil and gas, so we're not really interested in you building hotels. Senator Walter Twinn could not come to this government and ask for the resources to begin to build what has become a very successful enterprise across western Canada because in this bill you've decided that the work of Senator Walter Twinn does not have value. I'm very concerned about that.

I've mentioned, you know, the retail level of work such as Mother Earth Essentials, mentioned the commercial level of hotels, and I want to talk about a few other areas where indigenous people would be rejected by your structural barrier, that prevents them from coming and seeking the kind of economic development. Now, we've heard members, we've heard the Minister of Indigenous Relations, heard members from St. Paul, for example, who have talked about businesses such as laundry facilities. Laundry facilities would not fit in here. They would not be able to do that.

We've talked about the fact that under the NDP government we created the Indigenous Tourism Association in the province of Alberta. The tourism association could not come and get money in order to develop incredible tourism opportunities in the province of Alberta, and we know that tourism is going to be one of our best employment opportunities in the future.

One of the really nice things about tourism is that you can have tourism experiences spread all across the province. Even if you are on a far-off reserve, even if you live in Fox Lake, you can design a tourist experience where people could come and experience what it's like to live in northern Alberta: perhaps some canoeing, perhaps some horseback riding, perhaps living in some cabins or some teepees, all of those kinds of things. I can tell you, having spent some time speaking with people in the German and Czech

communities in the province in Alberta, how much potential there is for tourism from those parts of central Europe and how much money that would bring in and spread around not just to Edmonton and Calgary but to the smaller communities, where we certainly could use a lot more employment. You're limiting a vast number of job potentials by limiting this particular bill to only resource development.

Another area that I think is important is the fact that communities are not only looking for business development because they want the profits that come out of it, but sometimes they want it because the business itself provides a service which they ultimately need. The Blood Tribe, for example Kainai, did an evaluation study about the economic leakage from Kainai First Nation into the surrounding community and found that well over 90, 95 per cent perhaps – I can't remember the exact number – of the money that people had in the community actually left the community to go out into the surrounding communities. Whenever anybody wanted to buy groceries, whenever anybody wanted to buy a car, whenever anybody wanted to do the things that we all want to do – buy clothes, buy things to make our houses nice and desirable – they had to leave the community.

So they made a decision that not only did they want to enter into economic development, but they wanted it to be an economic development that provided the services that people were now being forced to leave the community for. They created a grocery store, and they were able to do that with support from our aboriginal business investment fund. Because we have that fund – and you still have that fund available to you – they were able to not only have economic development, but they were actually able to have fresh groceries available within walking distance from most of the homes in Stand Off.

That was also done by the O'Chiese community, who built a gas station and a small grocery store in that community on the basis of their desire for economic development. Neither of those communities could come to this fund to actually do those things.

4:00

The third one I want to talk about is the grocery store that was built in Fort Chip by the ACFN and the fact that they were doing three things at once that I think are really important and would not be able to do. First of all, they were saying that, yes, they wanted to have economic development. They wanted to be able to benefit from generating income. But secondly, the cost of food in Fort Chip is extremely prohibitive to well-being of community members. For example, a four-litre jug of milk costs somewhere around \$25, and if something costs that much, you're not going to avail yourself of it very often. As a result, nutrition was bad in their community.

As is typical in the First Nations community, they weren't singularly minded. It wasn't just profit that was driving them. It was the desire for the well-being of all the community members in terms of nutrition that also led to them doing the grocery store. Because we had the indigenous climate leadership program at the time, we were able to sit down with them and say: "How do we make this even better yet? How do we actually help you, through the indigenous climate leadership program, to bring in a more sophisticated level of freezers and coolers that will use less oil, gas, or other resources in terms of keeping your food safe for the community?" Because we had that program, which unfortunately you've decided to not fund again, we were able to ensure that they took care of the environment, they took care of the nutrition of the community, and they made a profit altogether at the same time.

Unfortunately, your bill would not have allowed that to happen. They could not have come to you and said: we want to build this incredible resource in our community; reduce our costs in terms of

running our business; reduce the amount of oil that has to be shipped up to this small, northern community, which makes it, of course, very expensive and also dangerous to the environment; and we want to make sure our people are well fed. They can't do that. You've excluded that possibility here.

The purpose of this amendment is simply to take what you have decided is a good thing to do and to say to you: "Yes. We agree, but do not limit yourselves. Do not impose upon others your idea of what is right for them." The indigenous community didn't come to you and say: "We want support in resource development only. Please ignore our grocery stores. Please ignore our retail stores. Please ignore our hotels." They want life to be better in every aspect, and they're asking you to help them to be partners in that process. I think you've started to hear them, and I celebrate that, honestly. I mean, I'm just real thrilled to be here being able to support a government bill. But I ask you to make it work for them, to stop imposing the colonialist structure that says: you can develop but only in ways that we want you to develop or only in ways that somehow reinforce our intentions in terms of development of the province of Alberta.

Get out of the way. This is your chance to get out of the way and to say to the indigenous people: "You know what? You're smart enough. You're hard working enough. You care enough about this to decide for yourselves what kind of economic development really works and what you'd like to see happen in the future. We have faith in you, we believe in you, and we have respect for your sense of self-determination." That's what we're asking you to do. We're asking you to get out of the way and show some respect to the indigenous community by allowing them to have economic development where they determine economic development would best be directed.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the comments. A lot of those issues, we put a lot of thought into it because we did do a lot of travelling and consultation across the province, and we heard lots of ideas come up, everything from tourism – if you go down to southern Alberta, they tell me they've got wind and water but they don't have oil and gas, so there are lots of options available.

Right now we're really focused on jobs and economy. That's what we're all about, and the amendment – the scope of the projects eligible, they're going to be defined in regulations, and the projects that are eligible will include natural resource projects and related infrastructure that fall within the mandate of the corporation. But in section 2(12) it also allows for the expansion of the mandate of the corporation to include other types of projects and related infrastructure.

We plan to lay out the definition of natural resource in regulation as opposed to legislation as it will keep the corporation flexible in the projects that it can participate in. Our intent is for the AIOC to initially focus on natural resource projects, which may be defined to include renewable energy such as hydro, solar, or wind. That's going to be laid out in the regulations. We're going to have a very competency-focused board so that projects that do come forward can't just be fluffy projects. They've got to be business-viable projects because we want them to succeed. We don't want them to fail. We want them to make money at this. That's why we're being very focused at first on the natural resources that are out there, which could include mining, forestry, all those good things that we have in Alberta.

Like I say, you did mention other tools in the toolbox, and we do have other tools in the toolbox for helping out with smaller projects.

We've also got a ministerial advisory committee, and on that committee I've got the president and chief executive officer of the First Nations Bank of Canada. Incredible man, full of knowledge, and I've been really respecting his input. He's working with us to help us with First Nations that may have other smaller projects that they could finance that way. There are other tools available for them to be involved. We're working very closely. We've listened to the First Nations, indigenous people. Like I say, at our stakeholders meetings there was an incredible amount of ideas that were coming forward, and we're looking forward to seeing them come forward to the board once it's put in place.

That's my bit for now. Thanks.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

The Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. I just have a few quick comments. I just wanted to again thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations. You've done so much wonderful work. Thank you for taking us all along with you. This has been truly an absolutely amazing opportunity to come along with you on your journeys where you meet people and find out what is in the best interest of those nations because they are independent nations.

I know that there's been a few comments about language and the way that we speak about these things. I would like to also call out – you had mentioned that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had mentioned that you said that you had put dollars in to ensure that they took care of their environment. Again, I don't think that that is an issue. We're talking about First Nations people. They are the stewards of the environment. That's who we're learning from, so please, if you're going to question language, I think that has to start from within, especially having been a former minister yourself of this. Probably that's not that language that they would use. I would suggest that we learn from them in terms of taking lessons and understanding what happens in First Nations. I think I will take that from the First Nations elders and the people themselves. I'm very interested in going along and continuing on this journey with you. Thank you so much for doing that.

I also wanted to mention: the minister had already mentioned about other opportunities that are available within this legislation for flexibility with regard to small business, but as another member had mentioned to me, you do realize that since 2006 there is the First Nations development fund, which will work in conjunction with other work that's already being done by our government and work that has been done by previous governments, many previous governments, that have worked in conjunction, in friendship with First Nations in order to start building. This is all about leveraging equity. This is all about looking at what they have available to them. Right now if you have a house or anything, like the member had mentioned earlier, they cannot leverage that for dollars in order to put into businesses. Let's look at what we do have. Our natural resources are something that brings prosperity to absolutely everybody in this province.

If you're looking at having a solid economy within a First Nations, we have to look at how we build that equity first and actually be able to support things like culture, the sale of culture, tourism, all of those things that the minister and yourself and other members have talked about. We completely agree with that. But let's be very, very understanding about the fact that we have this beautiful resource here in our province that is actually going to help build the equity that the First Nations and our partners in this have asked for. This isn't something that our government has imposed upon anybody. This came as a result of First Nations chiefs, families, people, women within the diversity council, all of those,

who came to us with the idea of how to move forward because they're not benefiting from that prosperity in this province the way that other people are. That's the entire point, to make sure that we have a partnership here.

4:10

I'd also like to mention, because it has been mentioned by other people, that one of the members had mentioned something about backslapping or something like that. I actually think that if you've done something great – like, the former minister has stood up and said some of the wonderful things that the previous government had done. That's wonderful. We do appreciate and understand and know that we work in collaboration with work that has been done. You should be able to stand up and say those things.

I have another moment where I'd like to acknowledge one of the members on our side who in opposition was the reason why we even acknowledge the '60s scoop at all, because of the work that he did in opposition, going from nation to nation and bringing that information to the minister at the time and making sure that he had access to that information. The previous government may want to take credit for that, but actually we worked together in collaboration with that. I would like to personally thank the member from St. Paul for his incredible work. I had the benefit of actually going along with him at that time to meet with the First Nations groups to make sure that that was acknowledged within this House. I want to thank you for that.

I want to thank the previous government for their work.

I sincerely want to thank our Minister of Indigenous Relations at this point in time for moving forward and actually taking into consideration the intense ability to have prosperity at this time and to work together in collaboration.

The Acting Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak on these important issues.

I do want to thank a few people today. I want to thank the minister for bringing forward this bill. I think overall it's a bill that does move towards meaningful work towards reconciliation, and it's an important investment. I think that's why, for a large part I believe, our caucus is largely in support of this bill.

I also want to speak specifically here about the amendment that my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has brought in. I want to speak to why it's so important that we do move forward with this amendment. When we look at some of the things that the minister was saying and how he was referring to the corporation being used in the future and how they have already scoped it out, this plan for what they want the corporation to focus on at the beginning and how it's these natural resources and projects and related infrastructure that's so important to them, and the minister had spoken about how the government is only so focused on jobs right now, well, Mr. Chair, I hate to break it to the minister, but there are jobs in other sectors than natural resources and related infrastructure. There are jobs in many different ranges of facilities, and those types of projects also deserve a chance to move forward. Those types of projects are important in communities. Those types of projects are something that are going to be able to move forward if we were to be less restrictive in this bill.

We speak often in this place about how government chooses to govern by regulation. In fact, Mr. Chair, I think this is one of those cases where kicking some things out of legislation might actually benefit the bill. That doesn't happen very often. Quite often it's

better to be more restrictive in our legislation and keep things very tight and compact so that it must come back to this House every single time. But no, I actually believe that right now our goal, if we want to invoke economic prosperity, as the government members like to speak at such length about, if we want to actually get this bill and this corporation doing what it was designed to do, would be to let indigenous people choose what they want to build. Let indigenous people choose the projects they want to support and they want to move forward with.

I think it's not something that we should have the minister – and I have much respect for the minister and his office, but he's only been in this role for a few months here, not even yet a year. Really, to try and give him the obligation to tell indigenous people what they have to build and what types of projects they should support: I think that's something that this House should not support. I think that this amendment would allow us to have more meaningful work. It would allow us to have more meaningful access. I think that when we talk about this bill and how this amendment would make it better, we can look and see that, really, this isn't the end. I'm concerned about things like what the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka was speaking about earlier and the type of language that was being used around how basically the only thing we need to do is give indigenous people economic prosperity.

As we all know in this Chamber, there are many calls to action, and not all of them are only about the economy. There are many calls to action that we have to move on to have meaningful reconciliation between the government and indigenous people, indigenous people across not just Alberta but all of Canada.

That is something that I want to make sure we drive home here today, that this is something that we need to commit to, but it is not the end. It is a first step. It is something this government is moving forward with, but there is much more to do, and I want that to be very clear for every member here, for every single person that speaks. We understand that this corporation will help in some of those cases, but it is not the only thing that we have to do.

Really, Mr. Chair, when we look at how this bill is set up, how this act is established, and at the things that this amendment tries to address, I think it's really interesting that this government on one hand is going to be giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations and on the other hand is going to be limiting the type of investments that indigenous people can do with the money that they're coming forward with with this corporation. I think that's something that's very interesting. It's something that I don't think is the right move forward, that if we're going to be establishing Crown corporations, we should be restricting the types of investments they can do while on the other hand giving money away to the wealthiest and most profitable corporations in this entire province and the multinationals as well. I think that's something that we should be concerned about.

I'm going to be supporting this amendment. I think it's important that we don't leave all of this work up to regulation. We just let the corporation of indigenous people choose what they want to move forward with. I think it's important that we give them full transparency in this act, and I think that this amendment would help us do that better.

Mr. Chair, I'd urge all members to support this amendment. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, we will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Acting Chair: Back to the main bill. Any members wishing to speak to Bill 14? The Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start by thanking the Minister of Indigenous Relations for his work and his commitment to developing this legislation. I understand that he has spent a lot of time meeting with indigenous communities and business leaders in order to form an understanding of what this legislation should look like in order to best serve Alberta's indigenous population. His commitment and the time he has spent on this incredibly admirable endeavour are amazing.

There is no reason that Alberta should continue to only make symbolic gestures to our First Nations people when we have the tools and the opportunity to make life better for a significant portion of our First Nations people. I'm glad that this government understands that when indigenous communities benefit from our resources, that impact is felt all across Alberta, whether from helping to ensure greater economic opportunity to the creation of more avenues with which to promote and pursue reconciliation. I sincerely hope this is seen as a massive step forward for reconciliation.

I tell you, Mr. Chair, that I was particularly touched in the summer in my own riding when I was meeting with an indigenous community leader who was so excited about this bill, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. He struck a meeting with me in Sherwood Park back in July. His name is Bill, and Bill's story, just like the story of so many indigenous people and communities, is one of incredible perseverance and inspiration.

4:20

Just sharing his story, he came from a difficult background, separated from his family as a youth, and had quite a life journey but eventually found his way back into his community, in this case in British Columbia, as a young man. He eventually honed his skills as a community leader in indigenous communities in British Columbia and got involved in helping with economic development in these communities, to great success across many First Nations communities in British Columbia. Now we're so happy to have Bill here in Alberta and in Sherwood Park. He was telling me he was so happy with this act, where, finally, an order of government, in this case the provincial government, is engaged in meaningful, substantive partnership with indigenous communities, including as well the Métis. He is very excited about that. Bill is a great community leader. His whole family, about 20 people, live within Sherwood Park, and they attend Sherwood Park Alliance church. I'm just so proud to mention his story here today.

One of the main issues that we see facing First Nations groups in Canada is a lack of economic prospects. That's not right. Those who were first on this land shouldn't be left without the economic opportunity to increase their quality of life. I'm glad this government recognizes that this is an area where previous governments have fallen short. I'm so glad to see our government recognizing not just the economic value that this investment brings but also the opportunities for reconciliation that the creation of this corporation enables.

This bill addresses recommendation 92(ii) of the truth and reconciliation report in a very unique way and one that I think opens up a number of opportunities for success. Recommendation 92(ii) reads:

Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

This bill doesn't just ensure equitable access or that communities will gain long-term sustainable benefits. It actually puts the keys in the hands of our indigenous communities. It gives control and vested interest in the future of Alberta's economy and natural resource sector. It grants massive opportunity for employment for indigenous groups, and I think this shift from forcing First Nations to be dependent on government to a policy of supporting our indigenous peoples and creating an economic path for them to chart their own path forward is a massive step forward on the road to reconciliation.

But let's also talk about what, beyond the reconciliatory benefits, this bill could mean for our First Nations communities here in Alberta. To do this, I'm going to focus on just one of the success stories of First Nations involvement in Alberta's energy sector. Let's talk about what has been accomplished by the creation of the Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp., or FLERC. FLERC was founded in 2000 and is owned by the Frog Lake First Nation. It was launched without any assets, production, cash flow, or staff but quickly found success by partnering with oil companies that wanted to use the territory of the Frog Lake First Nation. As a result, FLERC developed an aggressive drilling program that meant that the Frog Lake Nation was involved in every project undertaken on the reserve. This includes over 600 wells, and when oil was booming, Frog Lake was producing more than 3,500 barrels a day.

This isn't just a company run like most either, and its approach shows a great opportunity for practical application of reconciliation. FLERC's teepee principles ensure that they are committed to core values and a work-life culture that elevates their employees. Their key values of respect, hope, humility, kinship, sharing, and thankfulness haven't just helped them in the boom times but have helped their communities as they have had to lay a few people off following the recent volatility in the oil industry.

Frog Lake Oilfield Services is another company owned by Frog Lake First Nation, and it conducts the project management at FLERC at their facilities around the reserve. Both of these companies create a large number of jobs on the reserve, creating economic prosperity for more of the nation as the increased income allows others to invest into their community.

But another thing sets Frog Lake apart from most energy companies: the profits of Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp. are reinvested into the community, building homes and improving the standard of living for all on the reserve. Recently FLERC spent \$35 million in buying Pengrowth's cogen plant in northeastern Alberta. Despite the downturn in Alberta's oil market in 2015, Frog Lake didn't stop investing, and they hope that they and their 3,000 members can become self-sustaining as a nation. They plan to continue investing in projects such as cogen facilities to bring further wealth to their members.

Now, I want you all to imagine that this incredible success story could be replicated across every First Nations group in Alberta. This bill helps to see that possibility become a reality. We've seen how impactful this can be for our First Nations, the possibility of employment, investment, and economic opportunity for every First Nation in Alberta. This vision is why I am so thankful to Minister Wilson for all of his work on this legislation . . .

The Acting Chair: Names.

Mr. Walker: Yes. I see that. Thank you.

. . . and his consultation in meeting so many First Nations across Alberta. I would encourage all members of this House to support this bill and to encourage the First Nations in many of our ridings to take advantage of it.

I just want to reiterate, finally, Mr. Chair, just how excited I am about this bill and how, for example, my constituent Bill is also excited about this. You know, there are such great opportunities. We have the third-largest indigenous population in Canada and the only land-based Métis settlement in Canada as well.

I hope all members will support this bill. Thank you, all, for your time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? I will recognize the associate minister of mental health.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts in support of this bill. I wanted to support this bill on a couple of fronts. As a social worker I have had the privilege of working in aboriginal communities throughout my career, and most recently as Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions I toured the province. I had the opportunity to visit the Blood reserve. I also had the opportunity, when I went to Poundmaker's, to celebrate their powwow with the Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Let me tell you this. When we partner with indigenous communities, I discover that there are so many unique, creative ways that they approach the issues and challenges. Let me give you an example. In the opioid crisis we're talking about, the Blood reserve definitely is one of the areas that has been impacted very severely. But in looking at their creative solutions, when they did respond to this, they worked with EMS and created a culturally sensitive approach to manage the detox centre. That, I've got to say, is one of the very few different ones in the province taking that approach.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

When I visited Poundmaker's, the same thing: they incorporated the healing process, using the aboriginal culture and elders in creating very unique programs there. I vividly see the impact, that people are inspired and taking different paths to address the mental health and addictions crisis.

4:30

When we think of this act, that is giving the opportunity for our indigenous communities to directly partner with our resource development sector and work in partnership and in co-ownership in developing this sector, to me, that's cutting edge, again exhibiting a very unique, different approach to this. To me, we are very fortunate to have a government that finds a very tangible, specific, and long-lasting, cutting-edge approach for helping aboriginal folks.

I had listened to lots of members talking about, you know, what the previous government did and what others did, whether it was a gesture. This is more an action. Let me tell you this. Through my career I've seen so many efforts tried in the past to help our indigenous communities. More often than not it is money that's given to them, it is a program designed for them, it is services provided to them, and for the longest part many of those efforts didn't really yield significant changes in the community. In large part, I believe it is not a true partnership that builds on the strengths and the uniqueness of the aboriginal community.

But when I saw our government propose this one – so specific, so tangible – creating the money that is available for the aboriginal community, giving them an opportunity where they have a guaranteed loan, giving them the opportunity where they can directly participate in the business development, in shares, in how to manage the resource development, I was so delighted. This gives

me the fresh air of a very different approach in developing our indigenous communities.

Actually, during my campaign time I had the opportunity to dialogue with the community leader who is developing Eagle Spirit Energy, Calvin Helin, and when he spoke of his proposal at that time, he talked about addressing poverty. When we do ownership with the resource development, that will fundamentally change the game, and he calls that kind of a proposal transformational. I was so touched by that idea at the time. That was prior to our party developing a platform on this. When I saw later on that that kind of idea was brought into our party platform, that now as a new government we are implementing that, this is a remarkable – remarkable – example, in my view, of a government that is so committed to doing something real for the people.

For those of you who know me, I was born and raised in communist China. I'm so fortunate that I came to western Canada and have my master's and experienced the latter part of my life, or the other half of my life, in such a wonderful democracy. I came to a conclusion on my own that it doesn't matter how you label your government, that it doesn't matter what you say you want to do for people. What really matters is if an order of government can focus on the real needs of people and create opportunities to make a long-lasting change for people. That is a great government. I watched even in communist China how when the leaders focused on the economy – and over the last 20-some years a drastic change in people's quality of life in China. Actually, I just returned from a vacation there recently; it further enhanced my belief that even with a communist government, when they focus on the right issue for the people, people's livelihoods actually increase.

I see so much similarity to the current UCP government when we put economy, jobs, pipelines as the top priority, and when I see a proposal like this to tangibly, specifically bring our indigenous community on par with this piece, this is truly transformational. This is why I feel so passionate. I want to stand up to speak from my heart. I want to support this, and I urge our government and the rest of the members of this Assembly: let's put aside those political differences for the people of Alberta, for the people of our indigenous communities in our province. Let's put aside those little silly political games that you do, the meaningless amendment after amendment to delay for no purpose. Let's put your heart in the right place.

This is a great bill, and I'm so thankful to our minister for championing this, so thankful to our Premier for taking very specific steps to make tangible, realistic change. I'm looking forward to the long-lasting impact this one will produce for our province and for our indigenous communities.

Thank you, and thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise here today and speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The past couple of days I have witnessed my colleagues speak to this bill, and I'm proud to add my name to that list.

To start off the fall session, our government has introduced Bill 14, which allows indigenous communities to be stakeholders and invest in major natural resource projects across the province. I want to take a moment to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations and his staff for their hard work on this bill. This is yet another campaign commitment that has come to legislation. This is another example of promise made, promise kept.

A commitment is long overdue for indigenous people. We are making life better for indigenous people. I couldn't think of a better

way to begin the fall session of 2019 than by introducing Bill 14, the AIOC Act. I think it shows what a priority it is for this government and our minister.

Madam Chair, in April of this year our government was given the largest mandate in Alberta's electoral history to make life better for all Albertans. Bill 14 will set us down the path to economic reconciliation, allowing indigenous communities to own and invest in major capital projects. Bill 14 is the first of its kind in the country. If passed, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act will allocate \$1 billion in loan guarantees to help indigenous communities. This will allow indigenous co-ownership and create a working relationship on major resource development projects. First Nation communities will now benefit from the resources that have brought such tremendous prosperity to our province.

Madam Chair, for the longest time indigenous people in this province were mistreated. Our UCP government believes a better future lies ahead for indigenous people in Alberta. Real, concrete action is needed to make life better for all indigenous communities. This government believes that Bill 14 is a step in the right direction.

Over the summer our Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations met with numerous indigenous leaders. We have been present. We have listened. We want to do things differently from past governments. We want to take action in making lives better for indigenous individuals and communities.

Before introducing this bill, our United Conservative government consulted with over 200 stakeholders in indigenous communities. I'm proud to be part of a government that takes pride in consulting with Albertans before introducing legislation. This critical step was lacking in previous administrations. We want to create a strong partnership with everyone.

Many indigenous communities have the tools and resources to succeed, and we want to help them reach prosperity. Bill 14 will do a tremendous amount to bring indigenous communities into the fold to enjoy the same prosperity we find across this great province. Those who are willing to invest in themselves and participate will find that Bill 14 is a tremendous opportunity for indigenous people.

As the MLA for Drumheller-Stettler I have travelled long distances. I've witnessed many individuals create good lives for themselves, yet for many indigenous people that call this province home, poverty is real, and access to good jobs is lacking. They're held up by red tape and bureaucracy that limit their ability to share in the prosperity Alberta is renowned for.

4:40

Madam Chair, indigenous people face many struggles in life. They face numerous life challenges and structural barriers, including layer upon layer of government bureaucracy. I would like to point out that in our election platform we stated, "A United Conservative government will partner with Alberta's indigenous peoples in pursuit of reconciliation, inclusion, and opportunity." If this piece of legislation passes, the revenue streams from these natural resource projects can be put back into indigenous communities. This government understands that indigenous people want a piece and a say in the development of Alberta's natural resources. One of the many obligations of a government is to put the voters first.

Madam Chair, I knocked on many doors during the campaign. The biggest issues I heard from voters were jobs, economy, and pipelines. I made the promise to my constituents during the campaign that a United Conservative government will put Albertans back to work. In our first session we focused on getting Albertans back to work. The legislation passed during that time highlighted that fact. We introduced the Carbon Tax Repeal Act, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and the job creators'

tax cuts, to name a few. It only seems right that we pick up this session where we left off. Bill 14 will help put Albertans back to work. My colleagues and I understand that our natural resource industry employs many Albertans. Bill 14 will help revive our natural resource sector.

As Conservatives we understand how important it is to have our natural resource sector thriving again. When our economy and natural resource sector do well, we all see the benefits as a result. Our communities and families will thrive. This government will continue to stand up for our natural resource sector. We won't apologize for this industry, that employs thousands of Albertans. We will fight back against those who are vying to land-lock Alberta's oil.

Madam Chair, we saw our past Premier and this previous NDP government oppose and actively protest the Northern Gateway pipeline, a pipeline that was unanimously supported by over 30 First Nations along its route. Indigenous people along with many other Albertans understand that we need to support our natural resource sector. Bill 14 will help provide financial and capacity-building support for First Nations looking to invest in the natural resource sector.

I had the pleasure over the summer of touring with Chief Joseph Weasel Child of Siksika Nation. We were in the Drumheller valley doing First Nations consultations on Drumheller's flood mitigation plan. He told me the exact same thing that our Minister of Indigenous Relations quoted him as saying. He said: this is real; this is the first government that's reached out with something real that can make a difference. Those were his words, not mine.

Thank you to everyone that was involved in making this platform promise become a reality. None of this would have been possible without your hard work. I'm supremely proud to support this bill.

Thank you for your time, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome the opportunity to speak a little bit more to this bill. I find myself needing to comment on some of the words of the Member for Calgary-Foothills because it identifies exactly the problem that I'm trying to address in terms of the issue of government telling indigenous people what it is they're allowed to invest in and what they're not.

I just want it on the record that it was a UCP member that compared the present government to the communist China government, not anybody on this side of the House. I just want to be very clear about that. His comments were that when the government, this communist government, really focused on the economy, it benefited all people, and he somehow seemed to imply that the government rather than people deciding what should happen in the economy is a positive thing. A bit curious coming from the UCP side of the House. But I accept that that's indeed what they're thinking when they create a bill that says that the government will decide and that the people will not decide what investments are necessary. So I think you kind of proved my point in a slightly odd way.

I think, you know, we've addressed that amendment trying to broaden out the types of things that people can seek funding on, but we still have the question of who it is that makes the decisions here in this bill, and it's one that I'm very concerned about. I know that the Minister of Indigenous Relations said that one of the reasons he opposed the last amendment was that they wanted to ensure that these were viable business projects that were moving ahead. Again, I'm very concerned to hear that, that the government are the only people who can decide what are viable business projects. I just want to remind the minister – he already knows this, but for the record we'll remind him – that indigenous people have been making

excellent decisions about viable business projects in many ways in this province for many years, including at least five corporations specifically designed to make good business decisions.

I'll just read some of them into the record here because I notice that these corporations are not in the act. There's no decision to provide increased revenues or resources to these corporations, who have demonstrated that they can work with the indigenous community because they are indigenous themselves and can be successful. We have the Indian Business Corporation. We have the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation. We have Apeetogosan (Métis) Development corporation, which, by the way, received an award two years ago as the best investment corporation in Canada in their category. We also have the Settlement Investment Corporation for Métis settlements, and we have the Community Futures Treaty Seven, all organizations which have demonstrated the ability to work within the indigenous community, to bring indigenous voices to the decision-making because indeed they are all staffed by indigenous people and have helped to create a number of indigenous businesses. In fact, if you actually believe that success should be rewarded, you should be taking this billion dollars and dividing it up between these five corporations because they have demonstrated it.

I just want to also point out that I'm a bit concerned that the Member for Calgary-Foothills has said in this House, after praising Communist China, that having an opposition that proposes amendments to a bill somehow is game playing. It tells me that he doesn't understand the nature of Westminster democracy, and I'm very concerned about that. You know, he actually got up and said that government should decide and opposition shouldn't propose. I can't believe that that's what I'm hearing from the other side of the House in a democracy of this nature. It is my job to actually propose amendments, and I would hope that the government would actually listen to the amendments and make good decisions based on the merits of that and not simply dismiss them as games because they would like government to have ultimate power like they have in Communist China. [interjections] I didn't bring this up. Let me be really clear. It was not this side of the House that made those comparisons, and I just really want to point out how appalling that is in, you know, essentially the centre of Westminster democracy in this part of the world.

I've identified a number of corporations that could have been financed through this bill in order to ensure that the actual decision-making in this bill is in the hands of indigenous people. These are people who have demonstrated through years of work the ability to successfully fund indigenous businesses and could have continued to do so if you really wanted indigenous voices to be at the forefront of making decisions in terms of economic development in indigenous communities.

On that theme, I am very concerned about another section of the bill, and that is the establishment of a board to make decisions about all of these matters. I've already pointed out and, actually, indeed the Minister of Indigenous Relations pointed out the fact that in section 2(12) it says that "the Minister may make regulations." Of course, in this case the minister identified this as a positive because he said that under that section the minister would be able to include other kinds of investment should they choose to do that, which is why he was bringing it up. But I want to point out that it doesn't say that the board can make decisions; that is, that the indigenous people can make decisions to expand this. It says that the minister can, so we're back to Communist China here again.

4:50

I'm very concerned about this. I'm concerned that while you're saying that you have had extensive consultation with the indigenous

community in the creation of this bill, which actually I accept – I have enough contacts in the indigenous community to know that the minister, I think, engaged in some good due diligence and was around the province and, I know, brought some of the other ministers to some of the meetings. So I accept that the intent was clear, that the minister did wish to seek out the voice of indigenous people and give them an opportunity to speak to something that would be very positive for them. That's why I'm supporting this bill. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

But now I'm concerned that you take the bill and then you stick a knife in the back of it. The knife in the back of it is that suddenly we're back to the minister making decisions, section 2(12). Then when it says that we will create a board, it's already undermined the ability of the board to make decisions because it's given those decisions to the minister.

Furthermore, in the description of the board it says, section 5(1), that the creation of the board will be "subject to the regulations." They're not telling us who's on the board or how those decisions will be made. They're not even telling us how many people are going to be on the board. One thing that they are absolutely doing is that they are not telling us how many indigenous people are on the board.

I think that if you are truly committed to hearing indigenous voices, then you must make sure that indigenous people are on the board. As a result, I have an amendment I'd like to introduce to the House on that section right now.

Thank you. I'll wait.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I will read the amendment. I move that Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, be amended in section 5 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) A majority of the directors appointed under subsection (1) must be members of an indigenous group identified in section 3(1)(a), (b) or (c).

It's pretty simple and straightforward. I like to keep my amendments really clean because it isn't a game. It isn't a game for me. I'm actually telling you what I think will make the bill better. I'm not trying to attack your bill; I'm trying to support your bill.

I am looking at the intent of that bill as described by many of you here in this House, you know, previously under second reading and now, subsequently, in committee, where you described what it is that you believed would be positive and wonderful about this bill. Almost to a person you identified that it was time that indigenous people had opportunities and decision-making power in their own lives, and often you identified structural barriers that prevented indigenous people from having those kind of decision-making abilities within the systems that we had constructed and forced them to live within. Yet when it comes time for the actual decision-making, who is going to decide what is a viable business project? Who's going to sign on the dotted line that, yes, we will backstop X number of dollars for this particular interest? There is not one single word in this bill that identifies that it should be indigenous people.

After hearing many of you say that ideas and values and programs should not be imposed on indigenous people but should be done in partnership with indigenous people, I haven't seen you take action on that, and that very deeply concerns me. If you fundamentally do believe that this is a bill that respects indigenous people and provides them the opportunity to act on their own behalf in ways we know they're fully competent to do because, of course, we've identified at least five corporations already existing in the

province of Alberta that are owned and operated by indigenous people – we know they're perfectly capable – then I would question why you haven't asked these five corporations to step in and form the board. Why haven't you gone to the people who have demonstrated their success, fulfilled your own mandate that you have identified, and ensured that the construction of the board is indeed indigenous people? Now, I would think that you probably should go to 100 per cent of the board members being indigenous people, but I accept that you've decided this is a partnership and that you would like to have indigenous people working with nonindigenous people to ensure the well-being of all the indigenous communities through the success of these various loans and programs.

I've been reasonable and careful in my submission of an amendment and have suggested that we take the simple rule, which is widely accepted in government in Canada, that 50 per cent plus one is a reasonable level of representation in the determination of success. As a result, we would like to see this government simply accept an amendment that does not change the intent of their act – in fact, I think it enhances the intent of their act; it is completely in line with what I have heard people speak to for the last two days – and enshrine in the act itself the guarantee that indigenous people will have the control necessary, and that is the majority control necessary, not just a voice, 1 in 10 or 1 in 12, but a majority ability to make decisions about what happens in the indigenous community so that it is indigenous people that are saying yes or no with the enhancement of their relationship with nonindigenous people, seeking advice, perhaps, where necessary, encouraging their participation and their vote, but ultimately it is indigenous people that will be able to cast the majority vote, 50 per cent plus one.

I ask you to support this amendment not because it's some kind of trifling game but because we truly believe in what we say, putting our action forward where our mouth is and ensuring that indigenous people have the voice and that they can't be undermined by nonindigenous people. Fifty per cent plus one.

Thank you.

Mr. Wilson: I want to thank the hon. member for his input and for being so engaged on the topic. I do appreciate your input, and I do value it. Thank you.

Just to speak to our engagement a little bit, we did spend most of the summer on the road engaging with eight different organizations and over 200 indigenous business and political leaders from throughout industry. I did take their feedback into account when we developed this bill. Our bill is meant to fulfill our mandate of priorities of being partners in prosperity with indigenous communities and also to get people back to work and get our economy back on track. The Alberta natural resource sector, a large part of the Alberta energy sector, is a huge driver of our economic output, and the AIOC has a strategic mandate to support our indigenous communities in participating in the natural resource economy, of which they are extremely supportive. Many of the chiefs and community members that I've engaged with have expressed their eagerness in applying for this fund. We heard from the indigenous community that there are barriers to participating in equity ownership in major projects, and that is why it's important to set up a fund focused on addressing this barrier.

In terms of the other entrepreneurial opportunities that the opposition Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has raised such as tourism and retail entrepreneurship, we will continue to support that through other tools. The Alberta aboriginal business investment fund continues to be available to support these initiatives. We'll also work with other ministries such as our ministry of economic development and tourism to support these initiatives.

5:00

As to indigenous representation on the board, our plan is to include indigenous representation but to be flexible as to how it happens instead of laying it out in a specific number or a ratio in legislation. The board is meant to be a competency-based board, not a political board. It's going to focus on making sure that the projects that are chosen are commercially viable. Indigenous representation on the board will be laid out in policy and reflect the many talented and competent indigenous people that we have in this province. We want to make sure that the board is arm's length so they'll be making the decisions. It won't be political decisions.

As I've spoken to indigenous leaders throughout the summer, I've made it very clear that there will be a lot of indigenous people on the board. We have Treaty 6, 7, and 8 and the Métis people; I want to include all of them in it. It may end up being all indigenous people. There are, like you say, a lot of very competent business-people out there that are working in the industry. On my ministerial advisory committee that's helping me steer this along, I have one of the best philanthropists in Alberta, Nicole Bourque-Bouchier. She has over 1,000 employees in her company, and she's on my ministerial advisory committee, helping us steer this along. Like I said, I've got the president and chief executive officer of the First Nations Bank of Canada helping us steer this along. We've got a lot of indigenous input as to how we're putting this together.

It is such an important issue. In my area where I grew up, there was a huge oil boom. There was a huge gas plant there, hundreds of employees. How many indigenous employees? I can count them on one hand. I knew him; I can literally count him on one finger. That's why it's so important. Unfortunately, he's passed, but that's why it's so important. We have to have that input. It's for them, and that's why we're doing this.

I'm assuring you that we will be making sure that we do have indigenous input on that. Like I said, we will look at that, and it will be in the regulations. We'll ensure that there is representation there, but it has to be a competency board. We want to make sure that there's the opportunity for other people to sit on the board as well.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Until a couple minutes ago, I had some real hope in this place that the very corporation that is being designed with indigenous peoples would have indigenous people on the board. Now, no offence, Minister, but I'm not going to take you at your word and believe, when you say: trust me; we'll have a number of indigenous people.

There's an opportunity right now, today, to put it in the legislation to ensure that there is at least half or a majority, a little over half, of indigenous representatives on the board. You would think that they would be entrusted to take care of the very corporation – because the challenge, government: not putting a majority of indigenous people responsible for their own corporation looks like another way that the government knows better and we can't trust indigenous people to be able to manage their own corporation. It's disturbing, because if I am to take the minister at his word that potentially, as he just said, the whole board could be indigenous people, then this should be simple. Enshrining this in legislation ensures that there isn't a game of politics, that there isn't a bunch of nonindigenous people telling the indigenous people how to run their corporation.

Let's remember that between 2012 and 2015 there was a piece of legislation that the former PCs brought in on aboriginal consultation. The irony of that one was that they didn't consult with a single indigenous community on the very bill that had the title in

the name, which once again was top-down, government-imposed, “we’re going to tell you how to function within a system; we’re going to tell you how you can participate.”

I think, you know, the fact of the matter is that I thought that we as an opposition party presented a reasonable amendment. We’re not saying that the whole board has to be made up of indigenous participation but that, as we’ve heard from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, there are incredibly talented, well-respected members of the business community who are indigenous, who I’m sure would love an opportunity to be at the table, to be able to help make decisions on the direction, the focus, the approval of the projects. This is empowering them, because right now, the way the legislation reads, it doesn’t empower them.

I mean, my concern with a well-intentioned bill is that much of the decision-making remains in regulations. The government can talk about how it means they can be more nimble. No. What it means is that your cabinet gets to make the decisions, and they don’t actually get debated in this place. I can tell you that you folks used that argument a few times in the last four years – and there’s merit to that argument – that when legislation is completely bare bones, it makes it very difficult because we all know that the devil is in the details.

But this ensures that there is going to be adequate representation and participation, which, you know, for me, is critical. In fact, I think it’s paramount to ensure that the very people who this is going to affect have a say, that they are sitting at the table. Otherwise, this very much could be a bunch of nonindigenous people telling indigenous people how the very corporation that is set up in partnership is not really in partnership, or maybe it is in principle but not in fact. So I really wish that the government reconsiders adopting this amendment because I also think, quite frankly, it sends a really, really wrong message to indigenous communities: “We don’t trust you. We don’t trust you enough to put you on a board. We don’t want you in charge of your own destiny. We will decide who’s on this board because we know better, because government knows better.” That’s the message that it sends to indigenous communities.

Again, I hope that there will be a strong number of board members made up of the indigenous community. But this provides a guarantee not just for all 87 members in this House; this sends a really strong message to the indigenous communities: you will make up the majority of this board; we trust you, we trust your judgment, your business acumen, and we want to do it in true partnership. Without putting this into the legislation, there is no guarantee that that will happen.

You know what? I want to take the minister at his word. I know that he is an honest man, but he may not always be the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and future ministers may decide: “You know what? I am going to use this as a political football, and we are going to appoint who we want.” I mean, that is the challenge when it’s not enshrined in legislation. It makes it more difficult for a future minister, a future government to come along and say: “You know what? We’re not going to respect the fact that this should be a board comprised at least 50 per cent plus one of indigenous people.”

I do hope that in the course of the debate – I’m sure that there are many people that are going to be interested in speaking to this, and I encourage that – there will be a reconsideration on behalf of the government that this amendment is meant and coming forward in the true spirit of ensuring that there is indigenous participation. This is not a political game. This is saying that the board should be made up, at least half or 50 per cent plus one, of indigenous participation.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Because my name was mentioned earlier, from the early comment, I’d like to have an opportunity to clarify what I said. I wish to clarify. I want to be very clear in the mention about China that the focus on the economy and the magnitude that hundreds of millions of people have been lifted from poverty because of the focus on the economy and jobs: that’s the point I was trying to say.

Let me be clear. I will never compare Alberta to anything like Communist China nor a UCP government to the Chinese government. That is totally not the conversation I was trying to say. I would never want to suggest that we’re acting like Communist China at all. My point in saying that even a Communist China, nondemocratic, when they focus on the right cause, can lift people out of poverty is a purpose that, you know, for this act – it gives the opportunity to develop, flourish the entrepreneurship of our indigenous community. That’s the real beauty of this bill.

That’s why I’m opposed to having any kind of a meaningless, insignificant amendment here and there just delaying the bill. That’s what I want to clarify, that I want to leave for the record.

Thank you very much.

5:10

Mr. Wilson: Thanks for clearing that up.

I just want to ask all members of the House – right now the board selection is open. If you reach out to your networks and if you have good people that you think would serve on the board – there are so many talented indigenous people out there; we’ve got them in all of our communities; they’re in the cities – reach out to them and tell them to go onto the government website for public board selection and put their name forward. I’d enjoy seeing as many names put forward as we can find because there are so many good people out there. I would ask you to reach out to your networks. I’m sure you all know a lot of good people that could sit on this board, so tell them to reach out.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I want to start by saying that I accept the apology by the Member for Calgary-Foothills, and we’ll leave it at that and move on.

I also wanted to address a couple of other issues. As the previous speaker from the opposition side has indicated, we really would like to see it enshrined in the legislation that indigenous people are on the board and in a majority position, not just, you know, token representation as some minor part of the board. I concur and reinforce the comments made by that member who said that actually we have good faith in the present Minister of Indigenous Relations that he will be true to his word. You know, it gives us some comfort, but we do know that ministers change. It’s the very nature of the work in Westminster democracies that we change our ministers for a variety of reasons and we don’t know about the next minister.

I can tell you that there have been concerns. I mean, in the last Legislature I worked very hard to get indigenous representation on the board of the AGLC because, you know, I’d had indigenous chiefs and other leaders come to me and say: we have all this money coming from our casinos going into the First Nations development fund, but we have nobody on the board to make decisions around this. So I went to our Minister of Finance at the time, who was responsible, and said: “Can we do something about this? Can we create perhaps another board or something?” We struggled with the answer. These are complicated questions. But one of the things we did do is that we did appoint a previous chief from Tsuut’ina First Nation to that board. We thought: okay; maybe this isn’t perfect,

but certainly we have created something new that had not existed before. We had indigenous representation on the board making decisions about the monies coming from the casinos.

Unfortunately, shortly after this government took office, they removed that person from the board. They eliminated the only indigenous voice on the AGLC. Because we have seen that happen by this very government, unprotected by the Minister of Indigenous Relations apparently, we're asking that that not be allowed to occur in future, that if representation of indigenous people is to be guaranteed, we ensure it by putting it into the legislation.

In no way does putting the language of majority participation on this board change one iota what has just been promised in this House by this minister. This minister has said that that is the intention; they'll do it. If that's the intention, if that's where they're going, if they are going to ensure indigenous representation on this board, why not actually put it in writing? It always makes me worried when somebody says: yes, I promise to do something, but let's not write that down. If I went to a car salesman, and he said, "Oh, yeah, absolutely; this car has never been in an accident," it wouldn't stop me from asking for the history of that car because you want to see it in writing that there hasn't been an accident. It's the same way here. We're simply asking you to put your name where you put your voice, and that is to guarantee majority participation by the indigenous community on this particular board.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford again for moving this second amendment here. I think it's something that's very important we talk about, and it's disappointing, what we've heard from the government on this as well. It's disappointing that the government doesn't understand that just saying that they will do something isn't good enough. It doesn't go far enough. I remember quite vividly members of the now government bench, when they were in opposition, telling us the exact same thing. I remember quite vividly the current Minister of Transportation saying this to us, actually: well, we won't just trust you.

Through you, Madam Chair, to the minister: I would love to trust you, but the reality is that we should be enshrining this in legislation. The legislation can be made better, and I know the minister understands that because the minister spoke at length about how important it will be to have indigenous representation on this board. So the minister himself, I know, understands how important it is to have this representation on the board and understands that having them be a majority of the directors on the board will allow the indigenous people to have that ownership and to be able to make decisions about their own futures. That is something that I know is important to the minister. It's something that I know is important to all members of the opposition here.

That's why I think it's so disappointing – it's so disappointing – that the front bench has been told to sit down and that they can't make any changes. It's so disappointing that they're being told that they have to give out a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway on one hand and on the other they can't even let indigenous people be the choosers of their own future, the deciders of their own destinies. That's something that's very disappointing, Madam Chair. It's something that every single member of the government benches should be concerned about. It's something that every single member of the government bench should be thinking very deeply about.

This is a simple amendment. It's something that is very commonly accepted, as my colleague had mentioned, across many

jurisdictions and in many different contexts, that 50 per cent plus one is all it takes to say that there is adequate representation and that these indigenous groups will have the ability to control their own destinies. That's something that I think is very important, and it's why we are going to fight to ensure that their voices are heard in this space. Even though the minister has spoken about how he understands that these voices are important and the minister has spoken about how the corporation definitely needs indigenous perspectives on the board, the minister is not willing to actually do the work and not willing to actually show indigenous people that this government is committed. It's not actually willing to show indigenous people that this government actually understands the issues, and that's disappointing, Madam Chair.

I do take the minister at face value when he says that he understands its importance, but what I don't give the minister credit for, Madam Chair, is that he will then go out and actually fulfill that understanding, fulfill that promise. That's something that people will remember and that people understand does not show meaningful consultation, does not show meaningful reconciliation, and does not show that this government actually cares about what happens with this corporation. It shows that this government thinks they know best and thinks they can go tell indigenous peoples how to run their corporations and how to invest and how to do all these things.

The minister said, "Well, if you know anybody, please ask them to apply," and that's great. There are, of course, open application processes in this province, Madam Chair. But the reality is that this is a system that is designed to not necessarily have that voice. It's designed for this government to be able to exclude that voice if they so choose, and that's something that every single person in this House should be concerned about. It's something that every single person in this House needs to look at and say: how come we were so quick to ram through a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to already profitable corporations, but when we're trying to support indigenous corporations, we won't stop and just vote for them to have their own representation?

That's the most simple thing in our Westminster parliamentary democracy system, Madam Chair, that people should be represented. This corporation, which is designed – it's in the name, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. It's in the name, Madam Chair, that the indigenous people should be guaranteed representation in their own corporation, in the corporation that's intended to help them. That we wouldn't enshrine that representation in it: I think that's something that we should be very concerned about. I think it's something that perhaps members of the government are ashamed of right now.

5:20

I want to say that this is our chance to make this piece of legislation better. This is our chance to accept a simple amendment. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I know, won't shy away from saying that he's not usually a man of few words, much like myself, but this amendment is. This amendment does not have any games, as the government has concerns about. This amendment is not trying to play politics or partisanship. This amendment is actually trying to make the bill better. It's actually trying to make the corporation more functional and more representative, and that's something I want every single person to think about.

I'm going to be supporting this amendment, I know all of my colleagues here in the opposition will be supporting this amendment, and I hope members of the government will have a long discussion about this and understand the importance of it.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to comment on the despicable display I just heard there. The hon. minister has worked very hard. I think he made it clear that he's talked to over 200 people, many, many aboriginal business and community leaders. If there's anybody in this Chamber that's done their work on a bill, it's this minister on this bill that we're talking about right here. When the members across start talking about who's done the work on it, you should actually be a little bit more fact based with your comments, because the hon. member that made those comments was very poorly informed. I'm going to assume he was telling the truth. That only leaves very, very poorly informed. He had not listened to the debate in this House, had not considered what's in front of him, and ought to actually stand and apologize to the minister although I do not expect that will happen.

I can assure you, as all members of this House now know – and I think the last one is maybe getting the message right now – that this minister has put a lot of work into this bill. He has considered it carefully, and he has considered the advice of indigenous people across Alberta with great care, respect, and treated them with care and respect and dignity. The hon. member really ought to actually give even at least half a thought before he gets on his feet the next time, because the last time was most unsatisfactory, and the hon. member really ought to be ashamed.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you. A lot of bluff and bluster from the other side again when that minister stands up.

I don't know if the Minister of Indigenous Relations has actually posed the question – he hasn't answered the question – to all 190 or 200 groups and individuals and organizations that he has talked to about 50 per cent plus one on the board of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. And did they say, “No; we're not interested; please don't put 50 per cent plus one on the board”?

That's what this Minister of Transportation is suggesting, you know, that he's done the homework – that's great; I'm glad – and that the homework proved that just exactly what's in this bill is what members of indigenous organizations and individuals who are indigenous and Métis have exactly wanted. Or would they see it as an improvement to what's here if, in fact, it was 50 per cent plus one of the board members, as my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has suggested in his amendment, which is eminently supportable, I hope, that “a majority of the directors appointed under subsection (1) must be members of an indigenous group identified in section 3(1)(a), (b) or (c)”?

Has the Minister of Indigenous Relations put that to every individual and group he's talked to? I would suggest he hasn't. I would suggest he's said, “There's a billion dollars in loan guarantees; we're going to make it happen; get onboard and,” maybe in more structured language, “for a longer period of time.” But I just don't understand what all the backslapping is about. This will help, but, you know, there are improvements that can be made to it, too, and once the bill is in for a period of time, maybe there'll be additional improvements that come through regulation to improve it. That's great. I'm glad.

We put forward an amendment that was eminently positive and said that the scope maybe should be investments that indigenous people already have in tourism, in commercial, in retail, but that was shot down by members of the other side because the oil and gas sector – and I think it says “natural resource” sector here – is the

only one that will create the jobs. It's what we ran on: I hear that repeatedly.

You know, I'm not going to belabour it. I just will say that this amendment is a good one. I think indigenous peoples, Métis peoples, identified in your bill as 3(1)(a), (b), and (c), would be fine stewards of this board, and it will force – it will force – your administration to meet a goal that is appropriate and important in the self-direction of this corporation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A2.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:27 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Ganley	Pancholi
Ceci	Irwin	Renaud
Dang		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Barnes	McIver	Schow
Dreeshen	Nixon, Jeremy	Schulz
Ellis	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Rehn	Singh
Glasgo	Reid	Turton
Glubish	Rosin	Walker
Hanson	Rowswell	Wilson
Horner	Rutherford	Yao
Issik		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We are in Committee of the Whole on Bill 14. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move that the Committee of the Whole rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 14. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.
The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think we've made pretty good progress and had some good debate today on the bill

before us. I'd like to thank members on all sides of the House for participating in that, and I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 10, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:45 p.m.]

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