



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 15, 2019

Day 27

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)
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Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
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Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
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Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 15, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Romy McMorrow. I would invite all members to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Roger Brewer

December 26, 1946, to July 27, 2019

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed to introductions today, it is with great sadness, felt by the Legislative Assembly Office and all of you, that I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to a significant figure in this Chamber.

Roger Brewer, the long-time console operator of the Legislative Assembly, passed away on July 27 after a brief battle with cancer. Roger started working at the Legislative Assembly Office in February 2004 after retiring from working at the CBC. Roger was hanging around home but his wife, Pauline, who joins us in the gallery today, was also working from home. Roger would come into the room where she was working and say: what you doing? It wasn't long before Pauline said, "You need a job," and she found the ad for the console operator position. Roger applied, was interviewed, and immediately was offered the job.

As console operator Roger sat up in the crow's nest, just above the big clock. Today Lacy is sitting there. The console operator does a few things. They press "record" so that what we say can be broadcast to the people we serve, and as I'm sure you've noticed, they turn the microphones on and off for us as we speak. As Roger turned on a microphone, he would quietly say the name of the person into the headset which he wore. Back at the *Hansard* office, editors could listen and double-check to see who was speaking. Roger would also tell those editors what was happening inside the Chamber. For example, he'd let them know if there was a change in the chair or a standing ovation. Sometimes he would chuckle along with a joke that the members had timely provided. Most importantly, Roger passed along to *Hansard* staff what they called pizza alerts. If Roger whispered that pizza was on its way, *Hansard* knew it would be a very late night.

It was clear to everyone around him that Roger loved his job. He was very dependable, always on time, and always available for work, planning his vacations around the legislative calendar. Roger was tireless. Once, when the Legislative Assembly sat for an afternoon, an evening, overnight, and through the next afternoon, he worked 36 hours straight. Sometimes he said that it was a bit

boring, but he never complained that a shift was too long. As Speaker Wanner said in 2018: "He is always there. He never leaves." And just this spring, at the end of a record-breaking sitting I personally thanked everyone who had contributed and called Roger the hardest working man in politics.

It was a shock to many when, halfway through this spring session, Roger had to resign because he'd been diagnosed with cancer. Since then, more than a dozen people have been trained on operating the console to replace him. Of course, Roger Brewer is irreplaceable, and he will be greatly missed by all.

Today we are joined by Roger's family: Roger's wife, Pauline Brewer, their daughter and son-in-law, Shelley Brewer and Shaun Semple, and grandsons Dominic and Taye Semple. Please join in welcoming them here to this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us this afternoon from Edmonton-City Centre are grade 5 and 6 students from l'école Grandin and, from Edmonton-Mill Woods, grade 6 students from Ekota elementary. Also, Edmonton-Decore: welcome grade 6 students from St. Anne Catholic elementary. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, we were treated to a stirring rendition of *O Canada* today from the constituency of Edmonton-West Henday. I mentioned Romy McMorrow, who led us in the singing of the national anthem today. She's sung in various choirs since the age of 10, in elementary school and the Knights of Columbus choirs, then the University of Alberta mixed choir. She's currently at the St. Thomas More music ministry. She has also sung the national anthem for Edmonton's own baseball team, the Edmonton Prospects, and I'm particularly happy to welcome her here today as a first generation Canadian. It's such a wonderful pleasure to see folks engaging in our new plan, but more importantly than all of that, today is also her birthday. The most happiest of birthdays to you.

An Hon. Member: Happy birthday . . .

The Speaker: Oh, man. You almost started *Happy Birthday* there. That got very dangerous. Unfortunately, we don't have anyone to lead us, so we'll have to leave that for another day.

On behalf of all 87 members, happy birthday to you.

Please join me in welcoming Romy and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chakkalal. Welcome to the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a statement to make.

Early Learning and Child Care Centres

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what will become of my job if this pilot program ends. What's the point of working? How can families get ahead? This grant has created jobs and has allowed parents to re-enter the workforce. Please don't take this away from us. I am pleading that this funding be taken seriously; it is so desperately needed by many people. This program has been many things to our family: a lifeline, a saving grace. These are quotes from letters and e-mails sent to the Minister of Children's Services from Albertans who are desperate that the early learning child care centre program be extended and expanded.

Today this Assembly is privileged to have in the gallery members of the AFL Fair Start committee, educators, child care providers, parents, and children – I see you, baby Carl – who have benefited

from the ELCC and are pleading with the minister to listen to their voices.

Last week, when asked about the review of the ELCC pilot program, the minister criticized it because it “did not track need . . . income . . . [or] employment.” This is troubling because it demonstrates that the minister does not understand the very program she claims to be reviewing. If she did, she’d know that the ELCC program is a pilot program for universal child care. It’s intent was to serve the majority of Albertans who do not qualify for subsidized child care but who can’t afford over \$1,000 dollars a month for it.

If the minister does not understand how the program works, then I’m worried about her ability to review it fairly and thoughtfully. I’m worried she doesn’t understand the significant impact ELCCs have on early learning, readiness for school, staff retention and professional development, accessibility, and, perhaps most importantly, getting Albertans back to work. Considering how quickly this government rushed to give away \$4.5 billion to wealthy corporations, I think the minister owes it to average Albertans to listen to them, too.

I’m passionate about this issue. I only wish that the minister was as passionate about making life more affordable for Albertans, improving early learning for children, and getting Albertans back to work. I’ll be speaking on this issue a lot, so I hope the minister can keep up.

1:40 Early Learning and Child Care Centres

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, I recently received a letter from a concerned parent in my constituency of Highwood. In this letter this constituent speaks at great length about the impact of the NDP’s \$25-a-day child care pilot program. When this pilot program was introduced, privately owned daycare centres across the province and even nonprofits that weren’t selected felt the pain.

Now, due to the previous government’s meddling in the marketplace, two daycare centres in my riding have had to close their doors. Kid’s Stop in Black Diamond and Children’s Place in Turner Valley were both forced to close down because they could not compete with the government-funded \$25-a-day daycare. Mr. Speaker, these are two well-loved daycare programs that provided an essential service and are no longer options for parents in my riding. This has caused upheaval for children and parents alike, and many child care workers are now out of jobs.

The previous government’s pilot program has caused a shortage of available child care in my riding, and families are now turning to private day homes. As my constituent said: “Day homes just don’t work for every family. And we used to have [a] choice in our town . . . Parents should be making [child care] selections based on who can provide the highest quality of care that works for them and their situation.” Government interference in the marketplace, running private child care providers out of business, and limiting choice for parents that need child care to return to the workforce are not making life better for the constituents in my community.

Given that the pilot program did not track income level or whether the parents are actually employed and given that this means we have no way of tracking if this program supports low-income families in need, I can only conclude that this is an ideologically driven and fiscally irresponsible program from the previous government. The constituents in my riding stated, in their words, “The government should not be [in the business of] picking the winners and losers in the childcare industry.” I couldn’t agree more.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has risen to make a statement.

Rural Crime and Police Service

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to update this Assembly on something truly despicable that happened in my riding this weekend. In the dead of night, two armed men with their faces covered by balaclavas broke into the home of Art and Bev Bergman near the town of Craigmyle. They proceeded to sneak into this elderly couple’s bedroom and hold them at gunpoint. These two men then bound Art and Bev with duct tape in painful positions and demanded money. The couple pointed them to a safe in the bedroom with some old savings in it, which the two men then emptied. Once they had the money, these men left a knife at the end of the bed and said: you can use this knife to cut yourself free; by then, we’ll be long gone. That was true. By the time they were able to call the police, these criminals were gone.

Yesterday I went to visit Art and Bev to hear their story first-hand and offer any support I could. It was heart-wrenching to hear their account of the events, and I’m sorry they had to go through this traumatic experience. Events like these have a ripple effect in the community, and people are scared. I heard about one of their neighbours who has stopped working past sundown so he can be home to protect his family.

Incidents of this severity are incredibly uncommon, but property crime remains rampant. No criminal starts off with home invasion, forcible confinement, and robbery. These guys have seen that they can get away with stealing quads and whatever else they can get easy. By eliminating the culture of apathy towards property crime, hopefully we can stop future offenders from getting as bold as these two.

I’ve heard a lot about the new police funding model proposal this last week, and despite the fact that the opposition does not have a single MLA representing a rural riding, they seem to believe they represent rural Albertans. Your NDP policies gutted rural Alberta for four years. I’m proud to stand with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Municipal Affairs while we work with rural communities to get more boots on the ground.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving Dinner

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the Leefield Community League hall a special Mill Woods tradition took place once again. It was the 27th annual serving of the Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving dinner, an event that was first held in 1993, and one that has continued to grow with each passing year. In 1993 the original owners of the Millbourne Laundromat, Shirley and Don Tripp, served their first free Thanksgiving meal to 42 people. Since then the event has grown considerably, and it now feeds over 1,300 each year. After the Tripps sold the laundromat, the new owners continued this wonderful tradition.

The increasing size of the event brought new challenges. Those were met with new partnerships. In recent years the Leefield Community League has hosted the event in their warm and well-cared-for community hall, the Rotary Club of Edmonton Southeast has also been a co-host now for many years, and Victoria Ewert, a Rotary Club member, has helped organize the event for most of the past decade. Volunteer chefs start cooking turkeys on the Friday and work through the weekend to ensure the feast is ready when the doors open on Thanksgiving Monday. Everyone is welcome, and those who can are encouraged to bring donations of warm winter clothing for those in need.

The Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving dinner is an excellent tradition, one that brings together people from across the community to enjoy each other's company along with a holiday meal. It's my distinct honour to have helped serve this meal at this wonderful event since coming into office, and I look forward to it every year. I want to thank everyone who's volunteered over the years to keep this incredible tradition alive. Mill Woods is a special place, where community is built through caring, compassion, and togetherness, and the Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving dinner is an exemplary example of that.

Thank you.

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

Federal Policies and Economic Development

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer my MP, Earl Dreeshen, and I spoke at a public rally in Red Deer organized by Rally 4 Resources and the Canadian tax federation. As demonstrated by bills C-48 and C-69, socialist policies hostile to economic competitiveness, and reckless indifference to billions in deficits, the greatest threat to Alberta's and indeed Canada's economic prosperity right now is the Trudeau Liberal government. The Trudeau Liberal government is an unprincipled government who by its actions cares more about political calculus than doing what is right. It is time to hold unprincipled governments to account.

The Canadian tax federation has offered one form of accountability. The Quebec Premier says that there is no social acceptability for oil pipelines. He also says that one of his favourite things about being in Canada is the \$13 billion his province receives in equalization. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation's response to this hypocrisy is launching the No Pipelines? No Equalization! campaign. Alberta has contributed more than \$600 billion net into equalization since 1961. This is what equalization has become, a structural, permanent welfare payment from Alberta to provinces which seek to undermine Alberta's interest. This is dysfunctional and in the real world is unacceptable. In the public interest I would invite Albertans to hold failed governments to account and, in particular, vote to fire the Trudeau Liberal government on October 21.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Canadian Energy Centre

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier unveiled his \$30 million campaign vehicle. It's run by a failed UCP candidate with no experience in oil and gas who's paid far more than the rules dictate. This campaign slush fund is also exempted from basic public disclosure rules, public tendering rules, whistle-blower protection rules, ethics rules, and conflict-of-interest rules, to name a few. To the Premier: how arrogant and entitled does he have to be to believe that it's okay to exempt himself from all of these long-standing rules for accountability?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of measures in place to ensure financial transparency.

As for the strategy undertaken by the Canadian Energy Centre, we will not be revealing that to the opponents of our oil and gas sector, who have for the last decade launched a campaign to land-lock our oil and gas sector. We will not be revealing that because Albertans do not want us to be doing that.

1:50

Ms Notley: Well, I disagree, Mr. Speaker. The Premier actually thinks taxpayers are happy to just hand over \$30 million every single year to his secret sandbox and that somehow we should just trust them. The problem is that the trust is already broken. Instead of hiring a credible nonpartisan with experience in energy and demonstrated campaign success, he's handed the job to a failed UCP candidate who is best known as a lobbyist for the payday loan companies. The first act this corporation has taken reeks of partisan game playing. How can Albertans possibly trust them?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected us to fight for them, to stand up for our oil and gas sector. With regard to the Canadian Energy Centre, it's a provincial corporation, which means that its financials are consolidated into ours. Under the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, section 10, their expenditures will be transparent. Under that piece of legislation they will be filing all of their budget, and that will be disclosed. It is transparent.

Ms Notley: In contrast, Mr. Speaker, this is the most secretive corporation created in the history of the government of Alberta. Now, this Premier broke a promise to disclose his secret leadership campaign donors. In his next leadership race his kamikaze campaign broke the law to the tune of over \$180,000 in fines. Most recently both the Premier and his Attorney General have been questioned by the RCMP in an ongoing investigation into fraud. Is the Premier really so tone deaf that he doesn't understand why his government should not be trusted with \$30 million to go off in secret and buy advertising and collect data about Albertans?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Energy Centre will be subject to the Auditor General review. That will be very publicly disclosed. Under the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act all of its budget and its financials will be disclosed. It's subject to a code of conduct, similar to all other government, where they have to abide by whistle-blower legislation. It's very transparent. It's all there in the legislation if the NDP would simply choose to read it.

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

Ms Notley: Well, I do congratulate the Energy minister on about the fourth version of what this legislation means, so we'll wait to see what comes next.

Rural Police Service

Ms Notley: On a different topic, the Premier gives 4 and a half billion dollar handouts to big corporations, and rural Albertans are paying for it. He can deny it all he wants, but the communities of Brooks, Wetaskiwin, Barrhead, Sundre, Foothills, Lacombe all oppose his plan to cut rural police funding. In fact, the CEO of Crossfield warned that some municipalities will, quote, very likely dissolve due to financial insolvency. Can the Premier please direct Albertans to where in his platform they can find "destroy small communities in rural Alberta?"

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General has been clear. We are not cutting any police funding. In fact, we will be increasing police funding. It's unfortunate that the Official Opposition continues along this line of questioning when they know they're being unfactual.

I was back home in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, to meet with my constituents and yours, right along our constituency line, about rural crime the other day. Let me tell you that they were still

horrified by the fact that this opposition while in government completely abandoned them, as they did all rural Albertans. Let me be clear, through you to them: we will not be lectured by them on how to represent rural Alberta. They abandoned rural Alberta, which is why they don't even have a member from rural Alberta.

Ms Notley: Well, don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker; ask the more than 10 or 15 representatives from rural Alberta who apparently are being unfactual. Every day we hear new concerns from people in those communities. The mayor of Red Deer county called the changes unfair, and he's now openly asking: what else do we cut to make this happen? To the Premier: if you won't answer me, will you at least answer the mayor of Red Deer county? What services should they be cutting to pay for your 4 and a half billion dollar handover to corporations?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Official Opposition continues to misrepresent the facts. Let me be clear, as the Solicitor General has: we are not cutting rural policing. In fact, we are going to be investing in rural policing, something that that party should have done while they were in power. But, again, through you to them, I will not be and nobody in this government caucus will be lectured by them when it comes to representing rural Albertans. Thousands of rural Albertans, my constituents and your constituents, sat on the stairs of the Legislature protesting against that former government. The NDP forgot rural Alberta, particularly when it comes to rural crime. That member even laughed at them when I asked questions about them in this Chamber.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that officials for this government as well as copious representatives from municipalities are not misrepresenting the facts, as the member opposite suggests. They are simply reading the documents that have been provided. Now, the reeve of Lacombe county asked the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and didn't get the answer, so maybe someone here could answer it for the reeve. She asked: how do you look Albertans in the eye and say, "You've been broken into eight times, and there are absolutely no plans for increased police service in rural Alberta"?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Let me be clear. I'm not saying that any municipality is misrepresenting the facts. I'm saying that the Official Opposition is misrepresenting the facts. The Solicitor General has been clear: we are not cutting funding when it comes to rural policing; we are increasing it. But the question still stands. The hon. member, the leader of the NDP, while she sat in this very seat right beside me, sat in this Chamber while I was Leader of the Opposition and asking about rural crime, and she laughed at rural Albertans while the galleries were full. Mr. Speaker, through you to her, will she finally stand up and apologize for how she treated rural Alberta? Yes or no?

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

Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Friday of last week new jobs numbers came out. There was not much to celebrate. Almost 12,000 people left the workforce. That's 12,000 people who gave up waiting for the UCP's 4 and a half billion dollar handout to big corporations. They gave up waiting for that handout to create them a job. To the Premier: what do you have to say to the almost 12,000 people who have given up hope for this government's corporate tax giveaway?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reality was that in September there were another 4,900 new jobs created in the province. While that's not a lot, it's an increase, and we're appreciative of that. Here's the reality. The previous NDP government, when they took office, inherited a challenging economic file, but they exacerbated that by raising corporate taxes by 20 per cent. With it, we witnessed the flight of capital by the billions and the loss of jobs by the tens of thousands. This government will chart a new course. We will create the most competitive business environment and attract new investment.

Ms Phillips: Well, some new course, Mr. Speaker. Since this government's corporate tax giveaway came into effect, almost 27,000 full-time jobs have been lost; 15,000 of those jobs have been lost in the oil and gas sector. Corporations benefiting from this Premier's handout have decided to boost shareholder dividends rather than create jobs. Many of these shareholders live outside of Alberta. To the Premier: is your government okay with the profits from the 4 and a half billion dollar tax gift going to Bay Street bankers out east while 15,000 oil and gas workers get pink slips?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, when the previous NDP government raised corporate taxes by 20 per cent, the following three years they actually collected \$2.3 billion less in revenues. That's the reality. When you create an uncompetitive business environment, you see investment fly out of the province, and you see job creation lost, ultimately leading to lower government revenues. We will reverse that course. We will attract investment into this province and create jobs and opportunities, which will lead to increased government revenue.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, this government cancelled programs that diversified our economy and added jobs and value to our natural resources and our renewable resources. They won't even support 50 women health care workers that were fired in Vegreville for no reason and only offered them their jobs back if they took a \$10-an-hour pay decrease. To the Premier: will you admit that when your Finance minister lackadaisically says that there might be jobs eventually from your corporate handout experiment, what he really meant was that his friends would get buckets of cash first and working-class people would come last?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of our job-creation tax cut, we've already seen significant announcements about anticipated investment in this province. Telus announced that they are going to be investing \$16 billion in the province, creating 5,000 additional jobs. Suncor announced that they will be investing \$1.4 billion, creating 600 additional jobs. Economist after economist has supported our view that reducing corporate taxes, creating the most competitive business environment, will create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans.

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

2:00 Early Learning and Child Care Centres

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta families are faced with child care costs equivalent to a mortgage payment, and working families are being forced to choose between their jobs and their families. That's why we created the \$25-per-day child care pilot

program, that helped Albertans re-enter the workforce and saved families \$425 a month. This Premier, by comparison, rushed to give \$4.5 billion to big corporations, but Alberta parents have to wait. To the Premier: give us an update. Are working parents and their kids the next group to pay for your tax handout to big corporations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services has risen.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to point out once again that the rhetoric around the job-creation tax cut is simply false. Speaking of jobs, we know that people want jobs. They want the economy back on track because it allows people to provide for their families, and a strong economy allows us to support those who need it most.

The terms of the pilot have not changed, and we will review the report when it's complete. The NDP set up the pilot so that it did not track need. It did not track income nor employment nor wait-lists. We've heard from many parents and daycare operators who say that the program isn't working for them.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the evidence is actually overwhelming in support of quality and affordable child care, especially when it's universal, as intended to be. This pilot project alone created 450 new jobs in the first few years in early childhood education, and estimates show that expanding it would further increase women in the workforce, adding nearly \$6 billion a year to Alberta's economy. What's more, 22 of the child care programs that we started are scheduled to end in less than six months without any action or comment from this government or the minister. To the Premier: if you're serious about supporting jobs in this province, why do you continue to remain silent on the future of \$25-per-day child care?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I spent the summer with a variety of child care operators and Albertans. We will be transparent, and we will ensure that people know so that they have predictable care as we move forward. Do people value affordability? Absolutely, especially for low-income families. Do \$25-a-day centres provide quality child care? Yes, but so, too, do the centres who weren't in the pilot who have been providing quality child care for decades. After the runaway spending, making life more difficult for families under the former government, we're going to stay focused on getting our province back on track, getting people back to work, and supporting those who need it.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that there are a number of centres that weren't part of the ELCC program that would love to be part of it. If the Premier won't answer me, maybe he will answer the parents and advocates and child care centres that are here right now, today. They want to know where this government is going with child care. They say that this program has been a lifeline and a saving grace that has benefited their child's development and helped them drive our economy. You owe these families an answer. To the Premier: can you commit today to expanding this affordable child care project?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, just because the member opposite doesn't agree does not mean I haven't answered her questions.

In April Albertans gave us a mandate to deliver on our campaign promises, not theirs. I appreciate some of the considerations made

in the pilot to address affordability, but I also know, as a working parent and someone who values fiscal responsibility, that I've never once questioned whether my neighbours, struggling to find work over the last four years, should be paying for my child care. On this side of the house, Mr. Speaker, we will remain responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars and stay focused on the needs of parents who really need support to enter the workforce. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members. [interjections] Hon. members, we will have order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein is rising with a question.

Provincial Lawsuit against Opioid Manufacturers

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Opioid addiction is a deadly issue that our province and our country are facing. Last year alone we lost close to 800 lives because of opioid overdose and addiction. Many of these deaths were caused by prescription opioids. In addition to the loss of life that we have endured as a province, the total economic cost of opioid addiction on our province is estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. To the associate minister: what is our government doing to recover the losses to our province?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the great question. It is true. Our province has endured many costs as a result of opioid addiction. This is why this morning I announced, alongside my colleagues Minister Shandro and Minister Schweitzer, that our government will be supporting the actions of British Columbia and other provinces in a lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and distributors. We will never be able to recover all the human costs associated with this, but we are standing up for Albertans. We're going to do our work to recover the costs associated with health care and the justice system.

The Speaker: I might just remind all members in the Chamber that the use of names of other members in the Chamber under any circumstances is not permitted.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the loss of life, including a little over a year ago the tragic loss of my close friend, former colleague, and constituent and given that opioid addiction has such a dramatic and lasting effect on our province, our families, and our economy and given that these companies seemed to have known that they were acting in bad faith, to the associate minister: just how far is the Alberta government willing to go to ensure that these companies are held to account?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans can rest assured that our government will not stand idly by while any company seeks to take advantage of families and individuals who are suffering from mental health addictions. Any company engaged in these practices should know that our government will pursue them to the fullest extent of our authority. Our government was elected to stand up for Albertans. We're going to do just that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. I'm deeply encouraged to hear that answer

and to hear what this government is willing to do to protect Albertans and to stand up for Albertans.

Given that opioid use and addiction is a deadly scourge that our province is facing and given that this government has committed \$40 million specifically to deal with the opioid crisis, to the associate minister: how does supporting this lawsuit fit into the overall addiction recovery strategy?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for making a very great point here. Ultimately, what we believe in is an approach that is fair, firm, and compassionate. Our government's participation in this lawsuit sends a clear signal to Albertans and the companies that we are committed to ensure that Albertans are treated exactly like that. That is also why we're funding an additional 4,000 treatment spaces, to ensure that those with addictions have access to the life-saving treatment and recovery services that they so deserve.

Climate Change Strategy

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, young people all over the world, including in Alberta, are looking for leadership on the most pressing issue of our time, climate change. This leadership is embodied in Greta Thunberg, who will be visiting Alberta. Now, I don't agree with everything that she says, but I do agree that we need to take this issue seriously and that we need to listen to youth, not mock them. To the minister. Young people don't want to pay for your \$4.5 billion handout to big corporations. They want action on climate change. When are you going to listen to them?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are taking this issue seriously. I'm looking forward to tabling TIER in this very place in the next few weeks, focusing on the UCP's approach, the Alberta government's approach, to the climate change file. We're proud of that. Now, I can tell you that what we won't do is continue the NDP's process, which was to put their head in the sand, tax hockey moms and hockey dads, have no visible impact on emissions at all, and instead go forward with a situation that was all economic pain and no environmental gain. That's a different approach from the one this government is going to take. We're excited to table TIER, and we look forward to seeing how the opposition reacts to it.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, given that the member opposite is making hockey moms and hockey dads pay for their \$4.5 billion handout to big corporations and given that this visit will undoubtedly draw a massive amount of publicity and given that this government mocked the youth rallying outside the Legislature earlier this year, to the minister: if you treat this visit anything like you treated the young people who rallied outside the Legislature, how many millions do you think it will take Tom Olsen's attack machine to fix Alberta's reputation?

2:10

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, there's the difference between Alberta's government and Alberta's former government, between this side of the aisle and that side of the aisle. They say that sticking up for our oil and gas industry, talking about our great environmental record, talking about the innovation that we have inside this province is somehow mocking people. That's not mocking people. We're proud to stand with the oil and gas industry. We're proud of our largest industry, and we're proud of the work that they're doing on emissions.

The real question for those members is: in this upcoming election are they going to vote for their antipipeline leader or their antipipeline close friend and ally Justin Trudeau? It's a question I've been asking for a while. We're running out of days. Which way are they voting?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, given that this government tore up Alberta's only climate change plan and replaced it with exactly nothing and given that our plan cut 50 megatonnes of emissions, created over 7,000 jobs, and funded green infrastructure investments all over Alberta, to the minister: if you really do care about tackling climate change like you say you do, will you commit to more renewable electricity, commit to phasing out coal-fired power, commit to reducing methane, commit to energy efficiency? Actually, will you commit to doing anything to tackle climate change?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I've already been clear. We have a plan coming forward on climate change, that I'm excited to table in this very place.

Let's talk about what the former government did on climate change. They brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province. It was all economic pain, no environmental gain. The leader of their own party in an interview near Christmastime couldn't even point to any emission reductions as a result of that plan. We will not be lectured by the NDP when it comes to this issue. Let's be clear. That is a party that oversaw the largest job loss in the history of the province, that took our economy on track to a hundred billion dollars in debt. Shame on them.

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

Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I asked the Minister of Transportation last week why he was repealing truck safety measures rather than listening to the families and survivors of the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy, the minister told us he had spoken with Toby Boulet. Well, Toby Boulet spoke to reporters about that phone call and said, quote: the government of Alberta has completely forgotten about the Broncos; this is about politics and economics, and obviously the minister skipped that part in our phone conversation. End quote. Minister, why did you misrepresent your conversation with a grieving parent?

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

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a couple of conversations with Mr. Boulet. They were both quite respectful. Speaking of misleading, the NDP had the Humboldt parents believe that they brought in MELT as a result of the Humboldt bus crash. Nothing could be further from the truth. That was brought in because the United States of America won't let a truck cross the border after February 2020 without MELT. Why don't you tell them the truth? This is something that you did that I agree with, but you exaggerated why you did it.

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

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Mr. Boulet went on to say that the Minister of Transportation, quote, only told me what I wanted to hear, and I was led to believe that the consultation process was still in place, that it was going on; well, it's obvious that many parts of the consultation process have already been decided, end quote, again to the minister: do you think

it's appropriate to deceive and play political games with people who lost loved ones in the Humboldt tragedy, like Toby Boulet?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, as I just pointed out, it's the NDP that misled those people. In fact, the consultation will begin shortly. It hasn't begun yet. The hon. member says, yes, we make some decisions as we go along. We do that. But certain parts of the population asked for a consultation, and they'll get one. No decisions have been made on the results of that consultation.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has compromised on safety and doesn't have the stomach to tell a grieving parent the truth and given that he's now resorted to misrepresenting a few conversations he's had with those who lost loved ones in the Humboldt bus tragedy, will the minister now commit to cancelling his repeal of truck safety measures and start an actual consultation with the Boulet family and so many others that were impacted by this tragedy?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member fails to say that they actually didn't bring MELT in. They announced it. They announced it and put it in place officially, I suppose, on March 1, less than about two weeks before the election. On the same day they nationalized driver training, cut the number of driver examiners in half, and crippled the government's ability to deliver MELT, the higher standard. We will deliver the higher standard as we undo the damage that the NDP did that made it impossible. We're going to fix it.

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

Connect Care Clinical Information System Review

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With the launch of the new provincial clinical information system, connect care, Albertans will have their health information consolidated under one system. This will ensure that Albertans have access to their health care information and actively participate in their care with their physicians. This system can reduce gaps, enhance efficiency, and improve communication between health care providers. The current scope under the NDP government was only rolled out to AHS-affiliated facilities. This means that health care providers, clinics, and PCNs not affiliated with AHS will not be included. To the Minister of Health: what is the status of the connect care review this government promised in the platform?

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

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. The member is correct. We committed in our campaign platform to review the health information systems in the province. I announced a review in June, including three systems: connect care, Netcare, as well as the MyHealth Records platform. The purpose was to avoid duplication of services and to make sure that we use digital health information to make the system work better for patients. In August I announced that Ernst & Young was selected to conduct the review. The work began in September, and I expect to see a final report in January.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that physicians working with AHS and also running private clinics will be required to maintain two systems that may not allow flow of information

between the systems – this is not only costly and inefficient but may offer opportunities for abuse by patients seeking multiple prescriptions, possibly to opioids – to the same minister: will Albertans and their physicians have the ability to access their information from all sources in an integrated manner?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health has the call.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, they will. There will be one entry point for patients to access their medical records through the existing MyHealth Records portal and the new connect care patient portal, my AHS connect. The entry will be seamless. Patients, as I said, will be able to access their AHS medical records through this connect care patient portal, and they will also be able to securely communicate with their health care provider as well.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given that the entire point of the connect care system is to reduce oversight and abuse and promote greater communication between health care providers in Alberta and Albertans and given that an efficient system will ultimately reduce health costs and prevent abuse and given that connect care is only currently available to AHS, to the same minister: how is this government planning on integrating other health care providers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue, and I'm happy to assure my colleague that we're working with AHS to make sure that that integration does happen. Community health care providers outside of AHS will be offered access to a connect care health care provider portal so that they can securely access information about their patients. That includes physicians, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, and other allied service providers. It's complex work, so it will happen in phases, not all at once. But it's essential, and I'm committed to seeing it through.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is rising with a question.

Education Funding for Enrolment Growth

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Education said that the opposition was wrong about enrolment growth in our schools this fall. This was another classic attempt that she had at misdirection, because she has failed yet to provide schools and school boards with any kind of funding certainty about what's happening in their schools. Meanwhile Edmonton Catholic schools has 1,200 new students that have come to their schools this year. To the minister: how exactly were we wrong about enrolment growth, and will Edmonton Catholic schools see any new money for these 1,200 new students?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. There has absolutely been enrolment growth, but we've accounted for enrolment growth. We have been very clear that we will be accounting for it in the upcoming budget, which will come out next week, and we look forward to sharing that with everyone.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the question that we and parents and school boards have been asking for six months is, "Will 'accounting for' actually mean 'funding'?" – will there be any new money for

new students? That's the question that these parents keep asking me. Given that Edmonton public schools has an increase of more than 3,000 students this year and that that means they need about 100 more teachers and about 100 more classrooms, many more schools, and dozens of EAs to support students with complex needs, to the minister: will the budget have the funds – not the accounting; will it have the funds, the money, the dollars – for these teachers, schools, and educational assistants, or should we ask the Finance ...

2:20

The Speaker: The Minister of Education has the call.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government remains committed to providing a world-class, high-quality education for all Alberta students. What the MacKinnon report highlighted was that Alberta spends more on its education system than most provinces, but the results just aren't there. Our government is committed to providing school divisions with the sustainable, predictable funding that they require and that they need. That's what I'm hearing. That's what we're going to do.

Ms Hoffman: Given that in the recent telephone town hall conversation with the Finance minister, he said that funding for education would be on par with the last school year – that doesn't account for 1,200 new Edmonton Catholic students or 3,000 new Edmonton public students – and given that many schools right across the province are reporting enrolment growth like Fort McMurray's, about 6 per cent growth in both of their Catholic and public districts, to the Premier: how come you had \$4.5 billion for corporate handouts but you don't have a penny for thousands of new Alberta students?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education has risen.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again I reiterate to the parents and to the children that we are committed to funding education. We're committed to building schools. We have already said that we are not cutting funding to education. We owe it to parents and children to get better outcomes for the money that we're spending. It's just another example of the NDP's fear tactics that continue weekly. Next week we will bring forward a budget, which will reveal everything to everyone.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is rising with a question.

Seniors' Benefit Program and Long-term Care

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta seniors fear they'll pay the price for the UCP's regressive policies, including the \$4.5 billion giveaway to corporations. The UCP commissioned a report that only looked at expenditures and thus recommends a 20 per cent cut to health care funding commensurate with B.C. Notably, B.C. has no government-funded drug plan for seniors. Here in Alberta we have such a plan. To the minister of seniors: are you really going to make Alberta seniors spend more on their prescriptions to pay for your corporate tax giveaway?

Mr. Shandro: I think, Mr. Speaker, that's for me if it's about the seniors' drug plan. We spend \$2 billion on our 21 different drug plans within the province. We're very proud of the drug plans we have for all Albertans, including our nongroup plan, as well as the \$600 million that we spend on our seniors' drug plan. Very happy to answer any other questions the member has about this.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that a few weeks ago our leader and I stood with seniors worried about the UCP government's plans to cut funding for seniors and given that Alanna Hargan, director and Calgary chair for Seniors United Now, called on the Premier to follow through on his promise to maintain or increase support for seniors, to the minister: why isn't your government shelving its failed corporate handout and focusing on care for seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to supporting seniors and Albertans with low incomes, but we also need to address the debt, spending problem from the one-term NDP government.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, given that the Canadian Medical Association reports that twice as many B.C. seniors living in long-term care report experiencing more pain than do those living in Alberta facilities and given that 50 per cent more B.C. seniors in long-term care are victims of inappropriate antipsychotic medication treatment, to the minister of seniors. We do a better job of taking care of seniors in this province. Indeed, seniors built this province. Why do you want to cause them more pain?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has an overspending problem thanks to the NDP government, who chose us to be on track to exceed \$100 billion and paying \$5 million per day in interest payments. We cannot unfairly burden this generation and the generations ahead. We must act now, and we must take care of Albertans and all seniors.

Federal Energy Policies and Taxation

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are generous people. We pride ourselves on helping our fellow Canadians, especially when times are bad elsewhere. All we ask in return is for the right to develop our resources and sell them at a fair price, but right now Alberta has received the short end of the stick. Minister, how will this government ensure that Albertans get a fair deal in the Canadian federation?

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

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Political leaders from across the country continue to inflict economic harm on our oil and gas industry. These are the friends and allies of the NDP. Whether it's Justin Trudeau musing about phasing out the oil sands, the carbon tax, bills C-69 and C-48, clean fuel standards – all of these things harm our industry – the federal election right now seems to be a race of which political party, the friends and allies of the NDP, can inflict the most harm on our oil and gas sector. We will fight for our oil and gas sector.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans have contributed a net amount of \$200 billion in the last decade alone to federal taxes and given that Justin Trudeau continues to attack Albertan prosperity with no more pipelines, Bill C-69, and the tanker ban, Bill C-48, will the minister please outline our government's plan to fight this legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy has the call.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill C-69 is opposed by 9 out of 10 provinces, almost every major industry association in Canada, as well as dozens of First Nations. Bill C-69 is a flagrant

violation of our exclusive constitutional jurisdiction to manage and develop our natural resources, so we've already launched a constitutional reference, a challenge against Bill C-69. Saskatchewan has joined this challenge, and we're in discussions with other provinces who are like-minded about defending our exclusive constitutional jurisdiction.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans voted strongly against the carbon tax on April 16 and given that our government has a plan to ensure that emissions remain low through our TIER program and given that Justin Trudeau intends to impose a provincial carbon tax on our province, can the minister please outline how our government is working to fight this unconstitutional tax?

Mrs. Savage: Well, Mr. Speaker, some days it seems like our primary method of defending our right to develop our oil and gas is through litigation and through the courts. Again, we have another one, the constitutional reference against the carbon tax. We launched that constitutional reference on June 20. We are expecting that to be heard in the court sometime in December. We have joined the Saskatchewan and Ontario reference, which is set to be heard in the Supreme Court of Canada in the early part of 2020. Manitoba is launching a constitutional reference, and almost all the provinces across the country have joined in this constitutional . . .

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

Community Grant Programs

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I joined our leader and my colleague from Calgary-McCall for a meeting with the new executive at the Dashmesh Culture Centre in Calgary. Members of the Sikh community told us about their vibrant and growing community. Specifically, they shared their concerns about the community facility enhancement program, known as CFEP, or the community initiatives program, known as CIP, that help support their community. To the minister: are communities are going to suffer as a result of your pandering \$4.5 billion to big corporations?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I'd like to say is that we're very, very honoured to have the very first ministry of multiculturalism in this province in 25 years. The direct result of that is to make sure that we're able to work with these communities to build Alberta up, to bring people together. That's actually why we were elected. They were tired of division. They were tired of people asking questions like this. Of course, we're going to be looking at making sure that those grants are available.

Thank you for the question.

Mr. Deol: Given that when the NDP was in government, we consistently supported the CFEP and CIP programs and given that we committed more than \$62 million to those programs in Budget 2018 alone – and that money went to community centres, hockey rinks, social clubs, and countless other groups – to the minister: where are these community groups supposed to turn now if there's only money in your budget for big corporations?

2:30

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. Well, this is exactly what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. This level of division and throwing people against each other is exactly why these guys are in opposition now. We are of course going to look at CFEP grants and CIP grants and all of those things that are available, even more so. In fact, this government has pledged money, \$2.5 million, to make sure that newcomers that are coming to Alberta have the ability to make sure that their professions are recognized, that they have those designations, that we make sure that we actually pull them out of survivor jobs so that they're able to pay taxes in this province to actually provide dollars for community centres.

Mr. Deol: Given that communities and organizations are concerned with government grants that help community members – in fact, the Finance minister even said during his recent telephone town hall that, and I quote, we are all going to have to learn to do more with less, end quote, even though big corporations have literally been handed billions of dollars, which aren't even creating jobs – to the minister of culture: are you disappointed that your Premier's corporate experiment isn't working, and will you commit here and now to maintaining or increasing funding for CFEP and CIP?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were in government, taxed everything that moved. They spent like gangsters, and they had this province on track for a hundred billion dollars of accumulated debt.

Ms Ganley: Point of order.

Mr. Toews: We were elected to change course, to manage our finances responsibly, and we will do that. We will deliver a budget next week that does it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order has been called at approximately 2:32.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

Medical Laboratory Services

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, this weekend, while the Minister of Health and his colleagues were enjoying their Thanksgiving with friends and family, medical laboratories here in our city had hundreds of samples sitting untested because they were forced to use medical equipment that has either failed or is about to fail. In many cases this equipment that they're forced to use is nearly two times older than its life expectancy, and lab staff have resorted to repairing malfunctioning machines by cannibalizing parts from broken ones. To this Minister of Health: were you aware that Alberta's medical testing equipment was in such a crisis?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I think it's a shame that once again we see from the NDP that they're spreading fear throughout the province by spreading misinformation. I was aware of the press conference that the hon. member had last week, and I can say this: these purchases have not been cancelled; they are being reviewed. It's a very ordinary review process within AHS, and I understand from AHS that most or all of them are going to be proceeding. Our government has given no direction regarding these purchases. There's been no reduction of funding for lab services in this province. We stand by our health care guarantee.

Mr. Shepherd: That's precisely the problem, Mr. Speaker: this government has no direction.

Given that our government not only committed to building the Edmonton lab hub and also created a \$3 million bridge fund so that these labs could immediately replace this urgently needed equipment and given that last week Alberta's lab technologists were told that money was no longer available and that they had 24 hours to provide a crisis case for equipment they had already begun purchase orders for, will the minister commit today to ensuring that that \$3 million bridge fund is available for that equipment?

Mr. Shandro: What I can say right now, Mr. Speaker, is that this information that's being provided by the hon. member is completely false. It's incorrect. It's a misunderstanding of the ordinary budget procedures within AHS. Let me be clear that I was concerned when I first heard the initial report, so I had my staff get more information from AHS. I understand that the APL identified that they did not have funds for these equipment purchases within their own budget, so they forwarded them for consideration to be part of the overall AHS equipment budget. AHS is clear that these are urgent priority items, and as such, they would be normally funded once they are evaluated through the ordinary AHS process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this minister, on the orders of his Premier, just simply jumped without a parachute earlier this summer when he chose to cancel the building of the Edmonton clinical lab hub, which would have brought new and cutting-edge equipment, and given that this minister has yet to indicate that he has any plan on how to fix the crisis state of Alberta's medical testing facilities, will this minister admit that this is simply part of their plan to let equipment fail so that they can use it as an excuse to justify introducing further American-style health care in our province?

Mr. Shandro: I will say this, Mr. Speaker. I am well aware of the need to invest in lab equipment in the province, and I'm working with lab providers to be able to determine these priorities. But I am not going to apologize for taking a different course from the NDP. Their plan was to spend \$50 million of taxpayer money to buy out a successful private lab provider in this province and remove 700 jobs in the constituency of Edmonton-City Centre.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose is rising. [interjections] Order.

Driver's Licence Road Tests

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous government made significant changes to the scheduling of road tests, to the detriment of the entire system. Rural communities such as mine in the Camrose constituency were particularly negatively impacted as the backlog resulted in a lengthy wait time for road tests. We are finding that it is still many months before a scheduled time for a road test can be made available. Can the Minister of Transportation please give this House an update on the status of the road test system?

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not pretty. What happened is that the former government got a test on driver examiners that said that it wasn't good enough, and I agree with that. I've reviewed that test, but part of what it said was that the number of tests needed in the summer is the highest. That government responded, on March 1 of this year, by cutting the

number of driver examiners in half, less than half. That's how they responded to a report that said that the highest need for driver examiners is during the summer. Not only that, they added the MELT requirements on at the same time. They essentially crippled . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer.

Given that Albertans are not able to take scheduled road tests in a reasonable period of time and given that it is a drastic change from the situation before the NDP formed government, in which those hoping to take the road test would only have to wait a week or so, will the minister consider returning to the previous system whereby local testers are scheduled and, by doing so, returning to a more effective privatized system?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, we haven't decided what we're going to do yet. We are going to look at it, but the NDP left a heck of a mess. They added on the MELT requirements, which we're going to deliver because MELT is here to stay. I know this system is not good enough, but we are cleaning up that mess that they left.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer.

My final question is to the same minister. Given that residents who live in my constituency of Camrose continue to express concern regarding the backlog of road tests and given that the people of Camrose see no resolution coming in the near future, can you please explain to this House what Albertans can expect from this recently elected government as pertains to the scheduling of road tests and clearing out the backlog?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've doubled the number of driver examiners. We've added people under licence to provide more drivers' tests. If need be, we'll add more people under licence to provide driving tests. I'm sorry we haven't got it done yet. The mess they left was that big. We couldn't possibly get it done because they dug quite a hole, that we are working very hard to dig out of.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements. If you have other meetings or appointments, please exit expeditiously.

2:40

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen to make a statement.

Rural Schools

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving, Mr. Speaker. This last weekend families and friends gathered to share a meal and express their gratitude throughout our province, and it probably won't surprise you, but the little ones who sat around my table talked about their school and their teachers. School is a big part of children's lives, and a lot of Albertans come together to ensure that kids have a positive school experience: teachers, support staff, custodial staff, bus drivers, principals, maintenance teams, curriculum and assessment experts, and the list goes on. Schools are

community hubs, and this is especially the case in many rural communities, like the one I grew up in, where the school library is the town library and the school gym and the ag hall are the two large public spaces that people come together in to gather.

Rural school staff go above and beyond their regular school day to support the community. Many rural educators teach multiple subjects to multiple grade levels. They help students explore new career paths. They sign up to coach a team that they know will take them on the highway for long trips on many weekends. Rural educators should be respected and honoured, but this UCP government couldn't rush fast enough to give away \$4.5 billion to profitable corporations, and now the MacKinnon report makes it clear that rural schools and those who work in them are on the chopping block to pay for this \$4.5 billion giveaway.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say thank you to the folks who work to provide learning opportunities for all Alberta students. My NDP colleagues and I will fight for you to have the tools that you need, and we certainly won't stand by while this UCP government makes you and your students pay the price for a \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway. We're going to have your backs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis is rising.

Canadian Nationalism

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Oxford dictionary a nationalist is, quote, a person who strongly identifies with their own nation and vigorously supports its interests. Yet this poor word has seemingly found itself so negative and controversial lately. By that definition I am a Canadian nationalist. I always have been, and I always will be. As a proud Canadian who truly believes that Canada is the most incredible country in the world, is that definition not exactly what I should wholeheartedly aspire to exhibit in everything that I do?

I think it's time we stop treating "nationalism" as a dirty word and start being unapologetically proud of this great nation that we call home. Loving and taking pride in our country should not be controversial. We are living through arguably the most divided times in our country's history, but rather than focusing on our differences, it's time we refocused on the commonalities and that which we love about our country. We are leading the world in environmental stewardship efforts as we continue to develop our natural resources. We are active in and committed to our democracy, our freedom of thought and expression, and our freedom of association, and we are known world-wide for our exorbitant friendliness. These are all reasons that should unite us in our love for our country.

All this hatred and division that's seeded itself across our federation lately is not the Canada that I know. I believe in a united Canada, and I believe in a Canada that empowers all of us to realize our dreams and our futures. We westerners are rightfully frustrated with much of the treatment we receive within the federation, but that does not mean we should outright give up on our federation. We have so much to be proud of as Canadians, and we will only continue to develop these reasons if we choose to work together rather than splintering apart. We need to put an end to this hatred and the division that is turning neighbour against neighbour.

On the eve of October 21st's pivotal election I beg of everyone in this House and everyone across the country: vote appropriately and refuse to give up on our Canada. Tough times don't last, but tough countries do.

Thank you.

Crime in Northeast Calgary

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about the devastating crime wave that has been inflicted on my constituency and other parts of northeast Calgary. Like my colleague before me, I too have a story to share. Late last week Calgary police were called following reports of a sighting of armed men roaming the streets of the Calgary-Cross community of Monterey Park. Police quickly arrived and located the suspects, but the story does not end peacefully there. These armed men tried to flee the scene by shooting their way through, and police were forced to return fire. Two suspects were promptly arrested, but one managed to escape. Sadly, this is becoming more common in places like northeast Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, starting in 1999 Calgary's crime severity index score sat well below the national and provincial scores. The economic recession of 2014, combined with an already upward trending crime rate, caused Calgary's score to spike from 61 to 79 points, a nearly 30 per cent increase in a matter of months. As of 2017 Calgary's crime severity index is sitting at 82 and has been drifting upwards while the inverse is happening to the rest of the country. These statistics look troubling on paper, but to my constituents they are not just numbers but a part of their daily lives. The crimes being committed are not simple summary offences like vandalism or speeding; they range from violent crimes to large-scale drug operations.

Northeast Calgary is an epicentre for gang-related activity and a central hub for the distribution and trafficking of drugs for the rest of the city. Resolving the issues that this community and my constituents face will not only be a major benefit to that community but to the city and the province as a whole. The Calgary police have been working hard to put a stop to the rampant crime, but it is a challenging process. Halting the production and distribution of deadly drugs is a key first step in improving the quality of life in the area.

Of course, there are many barriers preventing a drop in crime . . . [Mr. Amery's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

Navratri

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, recently many Albertans of South Asian background celebrated Navratri, which is a Hindu community festival. In the north part of India plus Nepal the festival is celebrated as Dussehra and Dashain. In the eastern part of India plus Bangladesh it is celebrated as Durga Puja. In the south part of India it is celebrated as Vijayadashami, and in the western part of India, especially Gujarat, it is celebrated as Navratri.

Mr. Speaker, the Gujarati community celebrates this festival with the traditional folk dance of Garba and Dandiya globally during the nine nights of Navratri festival. Navratri's meaning is "nine nights," and traditional folk dances take place by performers during the nighttime. The Navratri festival has the utmost significance in the Gujarati community as they have records of more than 100,000 people in the same place performing their traditional dance.

On behalf of the Premier and the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women I had the honour of attending three Navratri celebrations put on by our Gujarati community recently at the Butterdome in Edmonton and at Millennium Place in Sherwood Park. These events were hosted by the Alberta Gujarati Association and the Garvi Gujarat Association of Canada. Each event had around 3,000 to 4,000 people who performed their folk dance of Garba with colourful dresses.

At recent Butterdome events I enjoyed the company of my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of

Infrastructure, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, too. I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services also attended a Navratri event in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, Navratri is truly a beautiful festival that I especially enjoyed with our Gujarati community in Sherwood Park. On behalf of the Premier and our government I sincerely wish our Hindu, Gujarati, and South Asian communities a very happy Navratri.

Presenting Petitions

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present to the Assembly the Save Our Childcare petition, which has been signed by over 1,700 Albertans from ridings all across this province, including ridings represented by the members from the other side. The petition urges the government to continue the early learning and child care program, known as \$25-per-day child care, at all participating child care centres beyond the 2020 or 2021 pilot project end date and to expand the ELCC program to more sites across Alberta.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has a notice of a motion?

Mr. Jason Nixon: I have two, Mr. Speaker. First, I wish to advise the Assembly pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) that there shall be no morning sitting for the following day: Wednesday, October 16, 2019.

I also request leave to introduce a bill at the appropriate time being the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

The Speaker: Bill 16 is already on notice, so there's no need to provide oral notice of that, but thank you for your additional comments.

2:50

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 16

Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to introduce first reading of Bill 16, the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

As you know, the ranching and cattle industry plays an important role in our province. This bill will ensure that Alberta's hard-working ranchers can continue to protect our environment and help support our economy for generations to come.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has caught my eye.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of over 800 signatures collected in person and

online from the AFL Fair Start committee, that petitions the government and the Assembly to

- Recognize the positive impact access to child care has on women and gender equity;
- Expand access to high-quality, centre-based child care;
- and create a concrete plan with clear timelines to build a universal system of early childhood education and care.

This is in addition to the 1,700 signatures that I filed earlier on the petition.

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

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the KPMG Governance Review of the Real Estate Council of Alberta, which clearly lays out the extent of the dysfunction at the council and which I referenced several times in my comments about Bill 15 on Thursday afternoon last week.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings today? It looks like the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This is an article from St. Albert Today, part of the *St. Albert Gazette*, and it's entitled 30 Per Cent Drop in Bird Numbers Since 1970, Finds Report, by writer Kevin Ma.

The Speaker: Anyone else who would like to table a document today?

Seeing none, hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. deputy Official Opposition House leader.

Point of Order

Insulting Language

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under 23(j), using "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." This point of order is in response to a statement made by the Minister of Finance in regard to a member of the Official Opposition saying that the Official Opposition, while in government, "spent like gangsters." Again, I am sure that all members of this House understand that, you know, framing people as gangsters is not necessarily a parliamentary term that we should be using when speaking to each other. I would just caution the government side that when you're speaking about things like that, you might want to consider which side of the House is currently under investigation with the RCMP.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise on this point of order. I want to start off by pointing out very clearly that the hon. Finance minister did not refer to any members as gangsters in his comments. He was extraordinarily clear that they spent like gangsters. We are talking and he was referring to the fact that they brought us to \$60 billion in debt, on track to \$100 billion in debt, and oversaw a government that usually had well over \$10 billion in deficits. If that's not spending like a gangster, I don't know what is. With that said, though, I do understand that the opposition probably doesn't want to have it pointed out that they had the worst financial record in the history of this province. As such, I'd be happy to withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: While I appreciate the member's comments, I hope that in the future, if he chooses to withdraw, he'll do so in a more expeditious manner to save us all the time and trouble. Having said that, I consider the matter dealt with.

We are at Orders of the Day. Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day
Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading
Bill 15
Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and move third reading of Bill 15.

As I have said before, this bill is an important first step to restoring Albertans' trust in the real estate regulator. I'm also very pleased that all members in this House seem to approve of the action our government is taking and see the importance of this bill. We cannot allow the real estate regulator or any regulator to wallow in dysfunction. The problems at the Real Estate Council of Alberta should never have been allowed to last this long or to get this bad.

Mr. Speaker, some of the members opposite have tried to take credit for the KPMG review that I just tabled moments ago, but I'd like to clarify something. For years members of the real estate industry, members of the council, and members of the public had brought substantial concerns forward to the previous ministers. Those concerns fell on deaf ears for at least two years despite the fact that complaints escalated in number and requests for ministerial intervention were received. It took at least two years before the previous government finally initiated a review into the council. Regardless of the rising complaints and the growing problems and concerns and requests for ministerial intervention, the former government sat and did nothing until the end of their mandate.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

In our government we will not sit on our hands and wait for problems to deteriorate, Mr. Speaker. This is a government of action, and that is why we acted so swiftly to address the jobs crisis we inherited from the NDP with our job-creation tax cut. This move was supported by leading economists as a strong step in the right direction to get Albertans back to work. That's why we passed Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act, as our first order of business, putting more money into Albertans' pockets and ending a failed NDP policy that resulted in all economic pain and no environmental gain. That is why we have been working so hard to reduce the red tape and to unleash the productive capacity of Albertans and Alberta businesses. Over 1 million Albertans voted for this government, asking us to carry out our ambitious platform, the most detailed platform in Alberta's history.

I'm proud of the actions that we have taken in these first six months, but sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we find matters of critical importance that aren't in our platform that do require immediate action. That is why we acted so quickly on the industry complaints and the KPMG review that we received about the Real Estate Council of Alberta. Albertans did not vote for a government that would listen to complaints but not hear them, that would review issues but not understand them, that would talk but not act. Albertans voted for a government that would do what they were elected to do, to take charge.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous speeches on this topic I very clearly laid out some of the issues at the Real Estate Council of Alberta. I encourage the members of this House and, in fact, all Albertans to read the KPMG review, that our government posted online. This report illustrates why Bill 15 is such an important piece of legislation. It was necessary for me to be so blunt about the problems at RECA because Albertans needed to know the extent of what was happening behind the scenes at the industry regulator.

They needed to understand that the action that our government is taking is critically necessary to stabilize the regulator and to get it back on track. I want to say that our priority is protecting Albertans, and our focus is on ensuring confidence in a real estate regulator that is functional and effective, not just in the immediate term but in the long term as well.

I cannot count the number of positive messages I have received from members of the real estate industry, not just since I tabled this bill but also since my second ministerial order to RECA in August. This feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with a recurring theme of: thank you; it's about time. Mr. Speaker, the pain felt by this industry was very real.

You may remember that in early August I issued a ministerial order and a statement about new advertising guidelines that RECA intended to impose that did nothing but add red tape and cost tens of billions of dollars to implement. Following that order and statement and carrying on through the summer, I received phone calls, e-mails, Facebook and Twitter messages from real estate professionals across the province, who were so grateful that I was seeing the problems at RECA and I was intervening. I was taking action. I received comments about bullying that was taking place and about gross oversteps by the council. I had one professional call my office in tears to thank me for the action I was taking. I received information about other problems that existed, and I got pleas to dig deeper. Many of those professionals emphasized the fact that it was refreshing to have a government that was listening and taking action.

With the tabling of this bill last week, Mr. Speaker, I continue to receive thankful and encouraging messages. Real estate professionals were and continue to be grateful that at last someone in government has really listened to their concerns, has heard them, has understood them, and is taking action. I've been clear that the council lost the confidence of their fellow members, of the industry, of Albertans, and of me. Judging by the feedback I've received over the past week and also over the past number of months, that confidence is already being restored by this government's actions on this file. Real estate professionals are already more confident not just in their regulator and in their industry, but they're also more confident in their government.

3:00

It's a slow process, Mr. Speaker, building confidence. We know that we have our work cut out for us in many areas as we work, for example, to undo the damage done by the previous government to our economy. This is work that cannot be completed overnight; it will take time. This government is focused on restoring confidence in all industries in Alberta.

When it comes to restoring confidence in the real estate industry, that work began with the clear action I took through a series of ministerial orders to address urgent issues and oversteps over the summer and is followed up by this bill, which will dismiss council and get the regulator back on track. That work will continue as we move forward alongside industry professionals to propose further amendments early next year. I intend to build on the confidence that the real estate industry is regaining by ensuring that we have a skilled and competent administrator in place to serve as the real estate regulator in the short term.

On the subject of appointments I'd like to talk for a minute about the Auditor General's findings on the NDP's appointment process when they were in government, which were included in a report published only six weeks ago. Some of the findings included that evidence was lacking on how board members had the skill and experience that the boards were seeking. Much as RECA received

a failing grade from KPMG, so too did the NDP receive a failing grade from the Auditor General.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that there will be no such report from the Auditor General's office about the appointment of an administrator for RECA. In order to effectively stabilize and focus the real estate regulator, it is imperative that an administrator is chosen who can come into the position, hit the ground running, identify gaps, problems, and solutions, and move forward to bring about positive change. This is no small task, and not just anyone will do. This is also an appointment that will need to move forward with some urgency because Albertans and professionals within the real estate industry must have clarity and stability as we move forward. Whoever is appointed to the role of administrator will have the qualities to assure Albertans and, specifically, real estate professionals that there is stability moving forward.

As I mentioned in earlier comments, Bill 15 is only a stepping stone, Mr. Speaker, and further work needs to be done. Once again I'll reiterate that I am committed to working with members of the real estate industry to ensure that further work and amendments are carefully considered so that we can develop recommendations for broader governance reforms to ensure that this dysfunction cannot ever happen again. Let me assure all members of this House and all Albertans that our plan is to transition to a functional council that will serve as regulator and that everyone can have confidence in. We will take the time to do this right, and the end result will be one achieved through collaboration.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank KPMG for their work on the review that they conducted on the council. I'd like to thank members of the real estate industry for their supportive comments and for the trust they have placed in me as I work to clean up this mess. I would like to encourage them to continue to share their thoughts and opinions as we move forward together. We will not let them down.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak to this matter.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is something on which we were in agreement on both sides of the House here, and I was about to rise and comment on the importance of governance and how it crosses partisan lines and how we can work together in instances when it's important. It's a little bit tone deaf to say those things after such a blatant and unnecessary display of collateral attack and partisanship. Nonetheless, here we go.

We are, of course, in support of this bill though not, obviously, all of the comments that were made. I think it's probably worth pointing out that I am in fact looking at the ministerial order that set up this particular review. It is, in fact, signed by the previous Minister of Service Alberta, so it was in fact started under our government.

I think it's also worth noting in this case that, you know, when we're talking about governance, it's not just about individuals; it's about systems. Yes, there was dysfunction on this board, but some of that dysfunction arose from the way the board itself was structured. That structure, I hasten to point out, significantly predates 2015 and is, in fact, a Conservative legacy. So I applaud this step. I absolutely think it is a necessary step, but I think it's worth pointing out that laying the entire blame for this on individuals when, in fact, in the report there are governance concerns fairly clearly identified – I think it's insufficient to simply do this. There need to be significant steps taken to address those governance challenges.

I also think it's worth pointing out that in this system that was challenged and that had some disfunction, there were good people, people who worked with AREA, people who came forward to complain about the council from within the council, who genuinely felt committed to creating better governance for the industry and to creating a better situation. I understand the reasons why it has to be done like this, and I don't disagree with them, but I do think that it's worth pointing out that some of these individuals were trying their best to fix what is a challenging and dysfunctional system.

I also think it's worth pointing out that the precursor to this report was another report, which the current government is refusing to release.

I think we're in agreement on both sides that this step needs to be taken. We're certainly supporting this. I'm certainly supporting this bill, and I'm urging all members to support this bill, but I do hope that additional steps are taken to fix the overall governance challenges. I'm someone who cares very deeply about governance and about the way we set things up and about creating a system of fairness. I think, you know, that having challenges this large arising from someone who asked some very valid questions about why people who were ill or who had children were disadvantaged as a result of that – I think that those questions were legitimate, and I think that they were properly placed, and I think that having people advocate for what they see as good governance and having people advocate for what they see as good regulators is very, very important. I do know that a number of folks from AREA had concerns about this going well back into the past.

I'm glad to see that this report has come forward, I'm glad to see that the government is acting on this report, and I'm glad to see that things will move forward, but I just hope that this doesn't get written off as being a problem with this board only or as being a problem with every member of this board. I hope that as we move forward, additional steps are taken to ensure that power doesn't concentrate in certain members of the administration, giving them the ability to control elections on council in a way that is not really appropriate. The minister did indicate that he would take further steps, so I hope this is one of them.

I do hope that they bring in a mediation process because I think we all know – you know, the court system is a fantastic system. It does a lot of things very well; it does not do all things well. Certainly, one of the major problems with the court system is that well-funded parties can sometimes use litigation to, shall we say – I don't want to say "take advantage of less well funded," but they can shift the balance. So I think that having mediation in place not only is a recommendation of the report, but I think that it's an important step forward so that in future, when issues arise – it's often the case that a governance body will have a disagreement amongst themselves. There are many regulators out there where the individuals have such disagreements. The point is that you need to have a method to remedy that disagreement that doesn't sort of deadlock everything. So I think that that mediation is really, really important, and I hope that it will be applied to ongoing matters arising out of the previous issues.

I guess, to sum up, my points here are that this is the right move. We are fully in support of this bill. I hope that this isn't the only thing we see. I hope that going forward, we see a change to the structure and a change to the governance so that issues like this don't reoccur and so that if good people do step forward and are willing to volunteer their time and their effort and their hearts to do something that they care about, to try to make the world a better place, and to create a better system of governance, this isn't the result of that. I do hope that we'll see a structural change that will result in a council that's able to govern itself going forward. I do

thank all the individuals that were involved in the writing of this report and the minister for being willing to take the necessary steps.

3:10

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to this matter? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the call.

Member Ceci: Thank you to the hon. member behind me. You know, I find myself rising and wanting to correct the record because what I heard from the minister really is just part of the story. The story about RECA is one that started before the NDP government that I was a part of. It was set up by the Conservative government, of which there are members who are Conservatives over there, the former party, and they were part of the people who were sitting on their hands with regard to RECA. They were doing that because they didn't bring anything forward at all, Mr. Speaker. It was the government that I was part of that initiated the work that led to the actions that the minister is talking about today. There was a KPMG report. Had we been in government, we would have acted on that report. There was a previous report that was commissioned that is not being released, I understand, by the current government.

The minister took an opportunity to talk about the appointment process, and I want to talk about the appointment process as well. When we were government, we set up a public appointment process. As I understand it, that's been thrown out by the UCP government, and they are back to appointing their friends and insiders to boards and commissions all across this province. I say that because I know people who were taken off boards and commissions on a Thursday evening. They were given a phone call at 7 o'clock at night that said, even though they're volunteers: "Your services will no longer be needed. We are putting new people in place." In many cases they had a couple of months to serve out before they would finish their time on that board.

I asked that person: do you know anything about how the replacement for you got put in place? The person told me that they understand that the person who was put in place as the chair of the board did not even know they were being put forward. I take from that that there was no public appointment process. People were tapped on the shoulder, essentially, and put in place, Mr. Speaker. If the minister talks about the Auditor General and their feelings about the appointment process that was put in place by us, I can tell you that the Auditor General will have a field day when that person looks at the appointment process put in place by the UCP government, which is back to who you know and not what you know and how you can help the organization.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just correct the record to say that RECA was set up by Conservative governments. For years those governments turned a deaf ear to the egregious governance issues that were in place. The actions taken to get us to today, which is Bill 15, were started by our government. If the minister knows something different, perhaps he'll share that, but I can tell you that I, too, support the work of getting to the bottom of RECA and getting a better governance process in place. That has not happened under previous Conservative governments. It started with us, and it would have finished with us.

The minister may want to get up and be partisan again about this issue. I feel like he's going to take every opportunity to say that the previous NDP government messed things up. That's not true, Mr. Speaker. I will stand up and defend our appointment process at every opportunity and let him know that we started the work that he is taking credit for today. That is the truth of the matter. That is what

we did. Recognizing that there were egregious problems with regard to governance, we started the actions.

People may argue about, "You know, it didn't go quick enough" and all that, but the reports were under way, Mr. Speaker. They weren't under way prior to the NDP government. They were being ignored by previous Conservative governments, who set up RECA in the way they set it up, and they put the people in place in many cases who were there – I think the person at the top stepped down after 25 or so years in place.

Mr. Speaker, we took the actions that led to the actions today, and I'm very proud of the work of my colleagues and I in that regard and of the former minister as well. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Prior to any further speakers, 29(2)(a) is available for anybody wishing to speak or make a quick five-minute question or comment.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill proper?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Service Alberta to close debate?

Mr. Glubish: Yeah. Before we close debate, I should just say, for clarification, you know, that timing is everything. While the former government did initiate the KPMG review, I still maintain that this should never have been allowed to last as long as it did. The complaints began to escalate substantially in 2016, and it took until 2019 for the KPMG review to be initiated. With that said, I'm pleased to be able to move forward with this as a solution to a problem.

With respect to the comments about future reform, I mean, I think I've been very clear in my comments in this Chamber that we acknowledge, as the KPMG report indicates, that further governance reforms would be recommended. We will move forward in exploring that with the real estate industry, and we recognize that that is a necessary next step for the long-term health of this industry. We will make sure that we get this right so that this level of dysfunction is never allowed to happen again.

With that, I close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

Bill 14

Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

[Adjourned debate October 15: Mr. Nally]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members looking to speak to Bill 14? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think this is a bill that will provide a lot of assistance, and I think it will do a lot of good things for our indigenous friends within our community. I know that the minister has worked very hard and consulted with many stakeholders to ensure that he put the best bill forward that he can.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 16, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:20 p.m.]

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