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The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, November 18, 2019

Day 42

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, November 18, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 19

Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 19, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, our government fulfilled its campaign promise, as you know, to repeal the carbon tax as our first priority. We were proud to accomplish that with Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, this spring. This was a promise that we made to Albertans along the way that we were excited to be able to fulfill for them to be able to take away the job-killing carbon tax and to be able to begin to move this province forward, something, I would remind you, that Albertans voted for in overwhelming numbers in April and sent clear instructions that they did not want a carbon tax going forward, clear instructions when they fired the NDP, who are now the only one-term government in the history of this province. A large part of that was to do with their job-killing carbon tax.

However, Albertans also voted in overwhelming numbers this April for a different solution when it comes to emissions reductions inside this province. They voted for the technology innovation and emissions reduction system that we campaigned on, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this bill that is before the House paved the way for. It's a commitment to implement the TIER system, as we promised. That will be achieved through Bill 19 if it passes this Chamber. So we are clear, this bill includes a name change, the TIER regulation and new provincial emissions management and resilience strategy.

Alberta's entrepreneurial spirit runs deep in this province. I understand that the NDP and some of their allies are anti the oil and gas industry, the industry that built this very province, Mr. Speaker, but I and my colleagues on this side of the House are proud of the oil and gas industry. We're proud of the energy industry. We're proud of their contribution to this province. We're proud of the men and women who built the energy industry and helped to build this province. At no time, unlike the members opposite, would you find me standing on the steps of the Legislature protesting against the very men and women who built this province, who have created an industry that is the economic backbone of Alberta, but not only that, the economic backbone of the entire country.

I always enjoy the member from Edmonton laughing when we talk about the energy industry, Mr. Speaker. I don't find the energy industry funny. I find it extremely important and an industry we should be proud of.

Our industry leaders, though, Mr. Speaker, my point is, are innovators. They are able to create such amazing things like creating the energy from the oil sands in northern Alberta, which has gone on to contribute to the success of this province in significant ways for decades, not only the success of this province but the success of the entire country. That type of innovation runs deep inside our province. That entrepreneurial spirit runs deep

inside our province. I'm proud of it. I know my colleagues are proud of it. The TIER program allows us to work to harness that same entrepreneurial spirit, to be able to focus on technology and innovation, to be able to move forward on the climate change file, to be able to move forward on reductions in emissions, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to the NDP's plan, which was to tax everyday Albertans, to reach into their pockets and to take tax money from them at the very time that Albertans needed their then government to actually stand up for them. Their then NDP government spent their time trying to tax Albertans instead of helping them and then took the money from that program, from their climate leadership program, and spent it on things like light bulbs and shower heads. Shame on them for that.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, they then took that money and they spent it with Ontario companies. Get that. I don't know if some of my new colleagues to this Chamber, who were not here in the 29th Legislature, know that, but that's what the NDP government did. They taxed Albertans while they were down. They took money from hard-working Albertans. They then spent it in Ontario companies to buy light bulbs and shower heads, Mr. Speaker, and then sent people around with those Ontario products to install them inside the people's houses.

Mr. Speaker, I know your neck of the woods. Both of us, as the co-MLAs for the great county of Mountain View, where I'm proud to be from and I know that you are proud to be from, were shocked to find out, then, that when they installed those shower heads in rural Alberta, where I'm from, they didn't even work. Not only that, they took the money, they invested in Ontario companies, they sent people around to install shower heads that didn't even work because the water pressure wasn't high enough in rural Alberta. Such a shameful process.

And then, Mr. Speaker, their leader famously – this is shocking. I know that you will be shocked. Their leader, the former Premier of Alberta, told Albertans to take the bus when they protested against her carbon tax. Told them to take the bus. How many buses are in your constituency? I know it's very similar to my constituency. Of course, you're from the east side of the Cowboy Trail. I'm from the west side of the Cowboy Trail, so maybe things are a little different west of the fifth, so to speak, but the reality is that we don't have buses. We don't have buses. There's no bus that comes and picks me up to bring me to Sundre to go grocery shopping or to do other things. It was a ridiculous, ridiculous thing to say but not shocking from a former government that called Albertans sewer rats or called them Chicken Little or those types of things. They clearly did not care about the implications of their carbon tax on the people of Alberta or the consequences to the very people of Alberta that they should have been trying to protect.

We, the current government, because Albertans told us to – I want to stress that – have brought forward the TIER program, which will focus on working through the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit in this province to be able to harness that to actually have implications in a positive way on emission reductions. We're excited about that, Mr. Speaker. It's why we brought the TIER program, something that Albertans voted for that was clearly put in the platform and is a clear contrast to – I see the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who I know is the environment critic in their party. It's a clear contrast to their approach, which was to tax my constituents, your constituents, and everyone's constituents inside this House with no significant positive impact when it came to climate change.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's approach also ignored the fact that the number one way that we can overcome this issue, which is a global issue, nothing that Canada does – and it's important. We should do

stuff. It's why we have legislation in this House today. But nothing that Canada does can have a significant impact on global emissions here at home except for one thing. Do you know what that is? Getting our clean natural gas to Asia and to India. Even the Paris agreement talked about that, about the fact that the number one thing that Canada and Alberta can do is take our clean energy products and get them to the rest of the world. That will have a bigger impact on global emissions.

Sadly, the former government, while they focused on taxing Albertans repeatedly, taxing fixed-income seniors, taxing school boards, taxing municipalities, taxing unemployed Albertans who are using fuel to try and find work, taxing farmers and ranchers, while they were focused on that, did not focus on the number one thing that they could do when it comes to climate change and emission reductions, which was to get our clean energy products to the world. Instead, do you know what they did, Mr. Speaker? They sided with their close ally Justin Trudeau, who was doing everything he could to hurt our energy industry, and even worse, they sided with the leader of their party – the provincial and the federal NDP Party are the exact same party – and they voted for him despite the fact that he was on the record trying to stop pipelines, trying to shut down the energy industry.

I see the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood smiling with excitement for supporting her leader. That's okay. That's her leader. That was her prerogative, but Albertans should understand that that's what the NDP's focus was. Our focus is working with the industry, continuing to reduce emission intensity, create innovative technologies that not only help us here at home but can help us abroad. That's exciting, Mr. Speaker.

The other important difference between this program and the NDP's program is that we are straight up with Albertans on how we're going to spend the money. The NDP took their taxes that they put on Albertans. They put it into what I affectionately or not affectionately referred to as the orange slush fund for all my time in opposition and then spent it all over government on different pet projects. Then they had the nerve, Mr. Speaker, to sit on these benches right here and to stand up over and over and claim that they were giving major rebates to Albertans when that was not the fact. What they were doing was taking money, putting it into general revenue, something that they promised Albertans they would not do and then did anyway, and then spent it on their pet projects.

7:40

Transparency on our side of the House is significantly different than the NDP. We put in our platform exactly what we would do: the first \$100 million plus 50 cents on every dollar to go towards technology and innovation and partnerships with our industry to reduce emissions and the remaining 50 per cent of every dollar to be able to go to deficit reduction to begin to clean up the mess that the NDP made when they were in power. Mr. Speaker, they didn't only make a mess of the emission reduction file, which, by the way, this province has been working on long before the NDP were in power, but they made a mess of everything when they were in government, so we had to do our part to be able to help to fix that.

Mr. Speaker, of course – and I know the NDP like to rail against this – an investment in what is affectionately referred to as the war room, the Canadian Energy Centre, that the Energy minister oversees to protect our largest industry. Well, of course the NDP rail against it. They voted for their federal leader, who wants the energy industry to be shut down. They supported Justin Trudeau, who said he doesn't want the oil sands to exist anymore inside this country. They stood with their federal Liberal allies and their federal NDP allies repeatedly, over and over stood against Albertans instead with their ideological friends in Ontario. We're

not doing that here. Instead we're standing with industry and our province and the people of Alberta.

My last thing that I want to show the contrast between the NDP's approach and our approach is that we are working to protect our industry from Justin Trudeau. The NDP over and over, Mr. Speaker – and I know you have been in this Chamber as long as I have and have probably had your own reaction to watching it repeatedly, but the NDP repeatedly have sided with Justin Trudeau over Alberta. Think about this: they sided with a federal Prime Minister who went out of his way to make life worse for Albertans, and they side with him.

We don't. We side with our industry, who we're depending on to create economic growth, to help people go to work inside our province, so we've created a system that keeps our energy industry, not just our energy industry but all of our industries, all of our large emitters and our conventional oil and gas facilities, being regulated inside the province of Alberta and not by an anti oil and gas Prime Minister that the provincial NDP have allied with and not by a federal NDP Party who's leader says that he wants to shut down oil and gas pipelines. Instead, we brought them safely to be able to have an opportunity to be able to regulate it inside our province with the province of Alberta. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because that's what they asked for. They do not want to be with the federal Liberal leadership inside Ontario despite the fact that the former government, now opposition, wants to continue to sell them out to them.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I think all members of this House should support this important piece of legislation because it fulfills a promise to Albertans that Albertans voted for in record numbers. Record numbers. Clearly and transparently put inside the platform, talked about by the Premier every stop along the way in great detail, his plan. That's what Albertans chose. Albertans chose our plan and rejected the NDP's plan when they fired them just a few short months ago.

Second, it's a plan that allows us to be able to harness the great entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of this province that we should be proud of. It allows us to partner with the people that built this province to be able to help innovate our way out of what is a serious problem.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, it's a plan that is actually transparent on how the money from this fund will be used, unlike the NDP's approach to this, which was to say one thing while they were running and then come in and bring in the largest tax increase in the history of the province.

One other thing before I yield the floor, Mr. Speaker, because this may be the last time that we talk about an emissions reduction bill inside this place. The former government still has not apologized, and rather than standing up inside this place and rejecting the plan that Albertans voted for in overwhelming numbers, they should take some time to think about why they got fired, because at the end of the day it comes down to the plan that they brought forward on climate change. It comes down to the plan that they brought forward that hurt seniors inside my constituency, that hurt schoolkids inside my constituency, that made it harder for businesses to create work and created some of the largest unemployment in the history of this province, that caused billions of dollars of investment to flee this province. That's what they should be thinking about right now, reflecting on why Albertans rejected their plan so drastically instead of still trying to defend it.

But you know what? They won't, because this is the party that was in power when their leader's office told seniors, when they raised concerns about the carbon tax in my riding, to go and hold a fundraiser to pay for the carbon tax. Well, through you to them, Mr. Speaker, shame on them. Shame on them. They should spend some

time reflecting on that, coming up with emission plans that actually work for Albertans, and stop spending their time trying to tax Albertans, trying to take money out of Albertans' pockets and then spend it on Ontario companies or their ideological friends in eastern Canada. Instead, stand up for Alberta, stand up for our energy industry, stand up for our other industries, and stand with Alberta, not their federal allies Justin Trudeau and the NDP.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at third reading of Bill 19. Anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak against Bill 19 at third reading. You know, it's always interesting to hear the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre talk about climate change. In the 15 minutes that he had to defend the legislation that he brought forward, he said that this bill is huge, that it's the best bill on climate change that we've ever seen – he said, "Trust me; it's going to be amazing" – and then he didn't provide any details or any plan on how Alberta is going to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. In fact – in fact – he admits that carbon dioxide emissions are going to increase under this plan. And then for the remaining 13 and a half minutes he railed against our climate leadership plan. You know, fine. We're no longer in the place of having to defend the climate leadership plan. That has been clearly thrown out, but a majority of Canadians and a majority of Albertans want the country – and that means Alberta has to do its share – to reduce carbon dioxide emissions immediately.

As I've said many times in this House, time is running out. We only have about eight years to get our carbon dioxide emissions under control before we start triggering catastrophic changes in the world's climate system, Mr. Speaker, and to think that Albertans won't pay the cost is flat out wrong. We are going to pay the cost in increased fires. We're going to pay the cost in increased floods. We're going to pay the cost in increased drought. We're going to pay the cost in increased number of days where the heat is intolerable. People are going to suffer severe health consequences and possibly die as a result of catastrophic global climate change if we don't get our act together.

That's why it's absolutely unacceptable that this government stands up and says that it's taking the issue of climate change seriously and then introduces a bill that actually increases emissions. You know, this is clearly not acceptable. We are still waiting for the federal government to make a decision as to whether or not this meets the federal backstop. I eagerly anticipate the government's decision, and I certainly hope that everybody, both the provincial government and the federal government, takes their responsibilities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions seriously and that we see a plan developed here that will result in real carbon dioxide emission reductions.

I don't hold out a lot of hope, though, because in the last few sentences of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre's speech he said that this is probably going to be the last time we discuss a carbon dioxide emission reductions bill in the House. I think that's a pretty terrifying fact. Here we have a plan that actually increases carbon dioxide emissions, and the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre says that there is nothing else we are going to do in the remaining days of our government to tackle climate change. That's unacceptable to me, that's unacceptable to the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I think that's unacceptable to Alberta and to Albertans' children.

It's ironic because we get lectured all the time about leaving intergenerational debt, fiscal debt, on the backs of Albertans, yet here we have a government that's leaving a huge climate change

debt for our children to have to deal with. I don't think that's fair. They don't seem to recognize the fact that they are saddling future Albertans with significant climate change debt, that will have consequences that are much more extreme than any fiscal debt that we could create.

7:50

On the issue of, you know, reducing global climate emissions, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is correct in saying that it is a global problem. However, the other statements that he's made wrapped around that are completely false. Again, we hear from the other side all the time that Canada has no responsibility, that there's nothing we can do on our own to reduce climate change emissions, and there's nothing that could be further from the truth. Canada, although it is a small emitter on the global scale, is still one of the top 10 countries that emits carbon dioxide emissions in the entire world. We're top 10. That means that nine other countries in the world have emissions that are greater than our own, and that means that we have a responsibility to reduce emissions simply because we've already had the benefit of carbon dioxide emission reductions, and we need to carry the load, as it were, when it comes to reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

The second argument that they come out with all the time is this idea that the best way to reduce global climate emissions is for us to ship natural gas to India and China. There are two things that are wrong with that argument, Mr. Speaker. The first is that none of the international agreements around reducing climate change emissions have any form of exchange of credits between countries, so Canada is not going to get any credit for climate emission reductions for reducing . . . [interjection] If the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, you know, would have the decency to keep his mouth shut while I'm speaking and engage in the debate when he has the time . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, while I appreciate the fact that you may not like the interjections from the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, I don't think threatening someone to keep their mouth shut is appropriate in this House. I think you can apologize and withdraw, and we can move on. I appreciate your commitment to not having people interject, but I also know that you know the rules of the place.

Mr. Schmidt: I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Regardless, the idea that we can get credit for emission reductions in China and India is flat out wrong. There's nothing in any global climate change plan that says that even if China and India would use more natural gas in electricity production for their energy uses, it necessarily means that they will even reduce their carbon dioxide emissions. There's nothing about building natural gas infrastructure in Canada to ship it to China and India that will be a benefit to global climate emission reductions. You know, the members opposite need to be honest with Albertans when they're talking about what Canada has to do with respect to climate change emissions.

I had to laugh when I heard the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre complain about how not transparent we were with the money that was invested through the climate leadership plan. It was so untransparent, Mr. Speaker, that every budget document introduced into this Legislature contained in detail where all of the money was collected from and where it was spent. Every organization that was involved with the collection and expense of carbon dioxide emission reduction plans had to provide annual reports to this Chamber. There was nothing but complete transparency around where every cent of that money was collected from and where it was spent.

On the flip side, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is quite clear that \$30 million a year is going to be funnelled into the Premier's war room, designed for the purposes of vilifying people who are engaged in their democratic right to discuss public policy issues in the country. There is no oversight over that. In fact, the company is exempt from FOIP. There is no way that citizens are going to be allowed to see how that \$30 million a year is going to be spent.

In fact, we've seen already from the government a lack of transparency around what even constitutes war room business these days, with the Premier's principal secretary allegedly on business for trade missions, and then it might have been war room business, and then it was a mix of war room business and trade mission. Of course, we'll never find out the truth because we can't find out where the \$30 million that is being collected and spent on this war room is going to be spent. For the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to accuse us of not being transparent is mind-boggling, but I know that in the UCP world whatever is good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander, so here we are.

The other thing that struck me as odd was the member's reliance on continued emphasis on Alberta's entrepreneurial spirit, that the money collected from the TIER plan is going to boost entrepreneurialism by letting the large emitters off the hook from funding research and development that they should pay for and turning that responsibility over to the taxpayers of Alberta. I don't see how that's in any way entrepreneurial. If private enterprise wants to sponsor research and development into carbon dioxide emissions, they're more than welcome to, but it's quite clear that they are either unwilling or unable to make those investments on their own, so they've asked the government of Alberta to pick up the tab.

Now, I am completely in favour of government spending on research and development, but to frame it as private-sector entrepreneurialism is absolutely ludicrous, Mr. Speaker. I think it would be wise for everyone to admit that this is a problem that requires collective action and that collectively all Albertans are responsible for working together on the solutions. That's why I think it's a good idea that we spend money on research and development, but it's also why we need to be sure that we're spending enough money on research and development and making other money available for the carbon emission reduction technologies that we know exist.

In my comments at second reading I said that we already know what works to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, right? It's energy efficiency, it's renewable energy, and it's public transportation. Those are the things that we need to be investing in to achieve significant carbon dioxide emission reductions, and all of those things are things that the members opposite have stepped away from. Now they're just pinning their hopes on some magical technology that's going to be invented that will somehow reduce carbon dioxide emissions when they're unwilling to implement the kind of technologies that we know will work.

You know, as a side note, Mr. Speaker, of course, the member opposite likes to highlight the fact that we've encouraged people to use public transportation, and then they say: well, we can't use public transportation in places like Olds and Rocky Mountain House because there is none. Well, that seems to me like a problem that the provincial government should fix. If there isn't public transportation available to people in those centres, then we should provide some. We should make public transportation available to people who don't have access to it. It's not just folks in Edmonton and Calgary who need reliable, affordable transportation to get to work and get their children around town. Everybody has that need. To say that investing in public transportation doesn't help the

citizens just reveals a lack of imagination on the part of the members opposite. In fact, we should be moving towards some kind of policy that creates public transportation that's more widely available to more of the citizens of Alberta instead of just laughing at people who suggest that public transportation is a potential solution to the issue of climate change.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other issues that I have with respect to this bill. We do have some questions planned for the member opposite during estimates tomorrow around some of the details of the TIER plan. Unfortunately, you know, it would have been nice to have been able to get that information before we were asked to vote on this at third reading, but here we are. We're a government, I guess, that's intent on making sure that we get all of our legislation passed without allowing the people of Alberta to thoroughly examine and understand the consequences of the legislation that we're passing.

8:00

For all of the issues that I've highlighted with this bill – the fact that it actually increases emissions, the fact that it eliminates spending on technologies that we know will work to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the fact that the money is being funnelled into a top secret Twitter troll farm, and the fact that, you know, it really leaves Albertans at significant risk of the effects of climate change – I urge all of my fellow members here in the House to vote against this bill.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 19 as 29(2)(a) isn't quite available yet but will be following the subsequent speakers? Anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 19, the emissions management and climate resilience act, or TIER. Let me make it very clear. Climate change is the largest crisis facing my generation of people. It is one of the most important things that we will ever do in this Chamber, so when the Minister of Environment and Parks gets up and says that he thinks that this will be the last time we ever speak of this again in this House, I think that is something that is shameful. I think it's something that we should strive to do better. In fact, it's in the name of his ministry, environment. We should be trying to actually, perhaps, do his job.

Mr. Speaker, we're here to talk about the bill today, and I think it's very important that we do talk about the impacts this bill will have on future generations because when members like the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka get up and heckle and speak and talk about, "Well, you drove a car to work today, didn't you?" and "You have to heat your house, don't you?" – these whataboutisms are really great and all, but the reality is that the science doesn't care whether you believe in it or not. The reality is that we as young people will have to deal and live with the consequences of climate change.

Legislation like this and repealing the climate leadership plan and moving with a plan that actually proposes that we increase our emissions is something that will have detrimental effects for decades and hundreds of years to come, detrimental effects for people like myself, detrimental effects for people that are younger than me in the next generation, and detrimental effects that perhaps that member will not see. That's true. Many people in this House will not see what those effects will be. They will not be here when the flooding comes. They will not be here when the forest fires happen, Mr. Speaker, but my generation will. I will, my children will, and the people that I know and love will. We are the ones that

are going to be living with the effects of climate change, the climate crisis. This is the reality of what is happening right now.

So when you use whataboutisms like “Did you drive to work today? Did you heat your house today?” that is a fundamentally flawed and, I will say, a fundamentally ridiculous idea because we can do things to help reduce global emissions, to help reduce emissions here in Alberta without resorting to trying to belittle individuals, without resorting to saying to individuals that they are the problem. It is a fundamental misunderstanding with what the climate crisis is. It is a fundamental misunderstanding of how we are supposed to deal with the climate crisis, because it is young people like us that are going to have to live with these effects. When the government members get up and say, “Oh, it’s not even a thing; it’s not real; it doesn’t matter,” or “They should just stop driving their cars and stop heating their homes,” that is completely ignoring the root of the issue. It’s completely ignoring what we are supposed to be fighting against. It’s completely ignoring how we actually should be addressing issues collaboratively in this House. Instead, these government members choose to belittle, they choose to ignore, and they choose to reject.

That is shameful. It’s because those are the things that we are going to have to live with. Those are the things that young people will remember. Young people will remember this. They will know that this generation, the one that came just before mine and before them as well, let us down. They let down the younger people because the younger people will no longer have clean air to breathe. Younger people will no longer have forests to go into and explore, our national parks here, for example. All these things are at risk. It’s not just the recreation, Mr. Speaker. It’s not just the playgrounds and the parks and the forests and the mountains and the oceans. It’s the very way of life. It’s the very ability to actually live. It’s the attack and the flooding. For something like I believe it’s — significant percentages of the world population live within flood zones, and as the water level rises in the oceans, their homes will be under water. That’s what we are talking about. We’re talking about a global climate catastrophe.

My colleague the opposition environment critic and Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar spoke about how we have eight years. That’s the problem with scientists, Mr. Speaker. They speak about how we have eight years to reverse the acts of climate change. The problem is that they’re probably too optimistic. They probably are actually saying: if we stopped emitting right now, all emissions, then in eight years we’d be fine. We know that’s not likely. We know it’s not feasible, but we also know that we can’t stop fighting. We can’t not try just because it’s going to make less of a difference.

It’s people like the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka who probably throw their coffee out the window when they finish it as they’re driving down the road. That’s because: “Well, one coffee cup is not a lot of garbage. Just like Alberta: Alberta doesn’t give a lot of emissions. If it’s only one coffee cup, what does it matter?” Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that I believe that any reasonable person in this province would say: well, that’s a stupid argument. That’s what these government members are saying when they say things like “Alberta is a small emitter,” when they say, “Alberta doesn’t emit enough to make a difference.” They’re saying that they are willing to throw their coffee cups out the window as they drive down the highway. That’s a stupid argument. I’m willing to say it. I’m willing to say it in the House on the record right now because it fundamentally ignores what young people have been saying, what scientists have been saying. It fundamentally doesn’t understand what a climate catastrophe is. It doesn’t understand why this is so important.

These are our lives. It’s not their lives. That’s right: many of them will not be here to see those effects. They will not be here to have

to live with the consequences of mass tropicalization, mass temperature increases.

To put it in perspective, Mr. Speaker, when the ice age happened, I believe there was a two-degree Celsius average global temperature difference. Average global temperature: there was a two-degree Celsius difference to what it was in about the 1980s. Since the 1980s the average global temperature has gone up almost one and a half degrees Celsius. One and a half degrees Celsius. We are on track to increase the temperature of this planet so much that the last time the temperature increased this much, half of the world’s global ice sheets disappeared. Half of the world’s global ice sheets. Almost all of North America, all of where we stand right now, where we are sitting right now was covered in ice last time the temperature changed this much.

That’s the type of disaster we’re talking about. We’re talking about a disaster that will be so significant that we will kill hundreds of thousands of people if not millions if not billions, Mr. Speaker. That is what is happening. That is what we’re talking about. We’re not being hyperbolic. When young people say, “This is a catastrophe,” we’re not being hyperbolic. We’re talking about the lives of millions if not billions of people on this planet.

Climate change is a real crisis that we can move to try and fight today, and this legislation does absolutely nothing. It increases the emissions that we will have in this province. It does absolutely nothing to actually make a difference. Mr. Speaker, it’s either because these members of the government don’t understand or they don’t care. I won’t hypothesize on which one that is, but it has to be one of the two because people and scientists and young people and people that aren’t young, either, have been talking about this for a very long time. They’ve been explaining that this TIER legislation, for example, is absolutely disastrous, that it is something that will absolutely harm our planet, Mother Earth, what gives us life. It will absolutely cause damage. That’s something that they don’t understand, that they don’t want to see, that they don’t want to reckon with.

I understand that it’s uncomfortable. I understand that it’s uncomfortable to deal with the reality that the way of life we have, myself included, Mr. Speaker, may be damaging our planet. That is an uncomfortable reality. It is something that nobody wants to admit. It is something that nobody wants to reckon with, but the reality is that it doesn’t matter whether we don’t like it or not. It will still happen to us. We will still have these effects on future generations. We will still have these effects on our families, our children, and our grandchildren because in as little as 10 or 20 years we will not be able to recognize what type of damage we have done. The planet will look fundamentally different. It will be fundamentally different. That is something that is very, very dangerous.

8:10

It is something that we should know better, and we do know better. We had a better plan, and we had a plan that didn’t try to pit the economy and the environment against each other. But that’s what this bill is doing; that’s what this TIER legislation is doing. It’s something that’s absolutely shameful. It’s something that’s absolutely a misunderstanding of how serious this issue will be. That may or may not be intentional, but I certainly think that we should strive to do better.

When we talk about striving to do better, the environment minister spoke about it himself when he was speaking to this bill, how they wanted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and different emissions like carbon dioxide and methane. Well, this very legislation that we’re looking at right here proposes that we actually increase the emissions by a significant number of megatonnes, Mr.

Speaker. Again, on a global scale, perhaps, yes, it's not going to be as much as we would like. That's true.

Let me tell you that young people if you talk to them, scientists if you talk to them would say that we should be reducing emissions quite a bit more than even the climate leadership plan that we proposed had. That's the reality. I'll admit it. The climate leadership plan, people would say, was not aggressive enough. But to introduce a plan on the turnaround that actually proposes that we increase emissions is shameful. That is absolutely shameful because it shows that the government really does not understand and does not care about what this environmental impact will be. Does not care, Mr. Speaker. I think that is something that's very, very dangerous, it's something that is very, very shameful, and it's something that I'm very concerned about.

So I'm standing here in this House today – I'm standing here in this House today – fighting to make sure that we have this on the record, because we know that this government has a majority and that what they have is the ability to ram through damaging legislation. They have the ability to ram through legislation that's going to hurt generations for decades to come, for hundreds of years to come, perhaps millennia to come. We can't predict the future, Mr. Speaker, but what we can predict is that this will hurt our planet. That's what we can predict.

I hope that perhaps members will look into their hearts and, hopefully, into their textbooks as well, but I hope that they will look into something and understand how drastic these effects will be, understand how drastically the environment will be damaged, and understand what this means because this isn't just screaming into a void. These are actual impacts that will affect this planet. They're actual impacts that will affect these students, these young people, people of my generation, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I know some of them won't be here to see the impacts, but I will. When we fight again to try and save our planet or try to reduce the damage that's being done to the planet in decades to come here, when this comes up again and again, even if the environment minister does not want it to come up again – he said so himself in his opening remarks here – when we have these conversations, I'm going to be proud that I stood in this House and fought against this disastrous plan. I fought against this plan that does nothing to help the environment, absolutely nothing.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to be able to just comment on a couple of points that were made by the last two speakers, actually. I'm quoting, actually, the World Resources Institute. What they've said is that from 2005 to 2014 Canada's global emissions decreased from 1.8 per cent to 1.6 per cent. Now, it's interesting also just to be able to – you know, a couple of members stood up there and talked about some things that I thought were interesting.

First of all, the last member just said that we don't have to worry because we're all going to be dead on this side of the House in eight years, basically. I have to say that I'm 52. I sure hope I don't die by 60, Mr. Speaker, because that's a very young death. I'm just not sure if it was the overheated rhetoric that we normally hear from this member, but I can assure him that I'm healthy and I have no plans of dying at 60.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting things that I think needs to be stated is that when you take a look at Canada's emissions, we talk about – I think it was the member that was just before the last speaker that said that we're in the top 10 for global GHG emissions.

Here's the thing. We'll often hear members opposite throw out some statistics, and we hope that they've done their research and their homework and that they know what they're talking about, but I actually just decided to do a quick little research to see whether or not we were in the top 10. Again going back to the World Resources Institute, I'm just going to tell you what are the top 10. The top 10: China, United States, then E.U., then India, then Russia, Japan, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Iran. Those are the top 10. Now, I didn't see our beloved country, Canada, in there.

Perhaps this World Resources Institute is wrong. Perhaps the members opposite are right. Perhaps they have some indisputable facts that have not been presented to us here tonight. It's sad when they continue to throw out statistics, inflammatory statistics. We hear on a regular basis from members opposite that in eight years we're all going to be dead because of not addressing this issue. This is the sort of thing that gets my children and my grandchildren concerned, and we have conversations about this. I can assure the members opposite that this is not just a young person's responsibility. This is actually all of our responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, being able to find this information – I found it on a cellphone. Now, 20 years ago, maybe 30 years ago, I couldn't hold that cellphone in my hand. I had to actually carry it in a briefcase. How did I get to be able to hold that cellphone in my hand? Because of innovation. It is human history that when we come up with a crisis, we have not actually solved the crisis by going back 30 years or 50 years and deciding to live like we did 50 years or 30 years ago. How we solved every crisis in human history is through innovation. We've innovated our way out of it.

This is the reason why I'm in favour of the TIER program. The TIER program, first of all, incentivizes innovation whereas the NDP's strategy was to actually provide Albertans with no incentive to innovate their way out of this problem. In fact, what it said was: we're going to tax you. Really, it wasn't about reducing GHG emissions for them. It was about actually increasing taxes. The truth is in the pudding, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that they couldn't actually bring in a PST, so what they did was the next best thing, a carbon tax, because a carbon tax basically taxes everything.

Conservative governments in the past made all the necessary arrangements, and this is... [Mr. Hunter's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is there anyone else wishing to join in debate on Bill 19 at third reading?

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 23 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in debate on Bill 23?

Is there anyone hoping to move second reading on behalf of the minister?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, I did move second reading of Bill 23 this afternoon on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

The Speaker: Excellent.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

8:20

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I recall, just prior to adjournment for the dinner break, I was speaking to second reading of Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019. Just to continue from my comments, I wanted to express that I do generally support Bill 23. I have some questions, however, that I think are some fair questions to ask with respect to this bill.

Arguably, I think that most people would say that these are pretty minor amendments, but they are something that we should consider and take a look at. In particular, I expressed earlier and I continue to express my concern about lowering the age of eligibility for part-time service for judges to age 55 from age 60 simply because I think there is a question that we have and we've expressed repeatedly – and all members of this House, I think, share this concern – about the administration of justice and making sure that our justice system moves efficiently through cases that they receive. We know that that has historically been a problem not just in Alberta but throughout Canada and, actually, throughout most court systems. Getting a matter to trial and having a matter proceed through trial can sometimes be a very lengthy process, and part of that challenge has been created by not having enough judges.

Certainly, when we're talking about moving some full-time judges both in the Court of Queen's Bench and the Provincial Court, moving more judges to be able to do part-time work, we have to make sure that we are appointing and that our federal counterparts are appointing enough judges to make sure that we still have a timely and efficient administration of justice system.

While I appreciate that many of our esteemed members of the legal community who do go on to serve as justices have worked very long and hard to be where they are and certainly I support the idea of more flexible work environments, I do share a concern that if we have more appointed judges who are now part-time rather than full-time, we need to make sure that we are making up for that by appointing more judges.

Certainly, I know that my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who is a former Minister of Justice, termed it, and I think it was a very appropriate terminology. She said that in trying to steer that large ship, there's a lot that has to take place before you can appoint new judges, and a lot of that is sometimes out of our control because it's based on how quickly the federal government also appoints new judges. However, it is important that we make some headway towards doing that. If we are increasing the number of judges who are now part-time as opposed to full-time, we do risk slowing down our system.

Again, as my colleague for Calgary-Mountain View pointed out, we have a very serious Supreme Court of Canada decision, the Jordan decision, in which the justices said, you know, that if criminal proceedings take too long, those criminal charges will actually be stayed against those accused members. That's something that we should all be concerned about. We know that a matter taking too long through the courts is actually a failure to administer justice fairly, and we don't want to risk more cases being stayed because of delay. That is only to say that while judges should be entitled to have the flexibility to work part-time, and they certainly have earned that, we do want to make sure that we are appointing enough judges to make up for those who are no longer working full-time hours.

I know these requests will continue to be approved by the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court and the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. I just encourage the government, in particular the Minister of Justice, to carefully monitor the impact of this change to make sure that all Albertans' access to justice is not impacted by this change.

I also want to comment on one other change, of course, which was the change to move basically our court system from being called the Court of Queen's Bench to the Court of King's Bench. In the very unfortunate but, unfortunately, also inevitable situation where we no longer have a Queen as our Monarch, we will need to move to renaming the system. I actually indicated to my colleagues earlier, you know, that I have been practising law for 13 years and never actually thought about the fact that our justice system is the Court of Queen's Bench. I took that name for granted. It's been like that for my entire legal career. It's not that long, but for my entire lifetime we've had a Queen, so I never really considered what would happen at the point when we in our system no longer have a Queen.

I hadn't really thought about this change, but while I acknowledge that it's within our constitutional system and our constitutional monarchy system to be moving to Court of King's Bench, I note that it's going to be actually, I would guess, quite a costly and lengthy process to do that because it is quite ingrained in so much of what we do in Alberta, not only in our justice system but certainly within our justice system, the Court of Queen's Bench, QB as we call it. Those are things that will take some time to change. It's an administrative change, but it could be quite costly when we think of how many things are branded with that term. I only mention that to say that it's a change that may be necessary, but it certainly might be costly, and we hope that there will be some vigilance and thoughtfulness done in how that is implemented.

The last small change that's taking place through this bill is to amend the legislation to allow judges to travel for professional development opportunities, conferences and such, and to seek access for federal reimbursement for that professional development. Again, I am completely in support of that. We know that as professionals, even as legislators here in this House we have an obligation to continue to develop professionally, to meet with our colleagues, to learn from their experiences, to share our experiences and our information, and also to do proper training.

I actually note that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View made a very good reference to some very important and necessary training for judges around sexual assault trials, especially because we've had unfortunate instances in this province and in this country of judges who demonstrate a lack of understanding around rape myths and, unfortunately, have been applying those myths while presiding over criminal trials. It's very necessary that all judges get access to adequate and appropriate training, specifically with sexual assault, but just general professional development is important for all professionals. Certainly, I know that it's something that would be very valued by our justices currently.

I'm generally, as I've indicated, in support of this bill. I do think that we need to make sure that we're monitoring specifically the reduction of the eligibility age for part-time work for judges and think about how that might change our FTEs and caseloads and how it will effect overall court timelines. Other than that I'm pleased to say that I generally do support these changes. They seem to be small but timely and seem to be updating this act to appropriate levels with respect to service and our name changes. Therefore, I'm proud to stand in support of this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd just like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for her caution around speaking about the Queen as she knows that one of your Speaker's favourite Standing Orders is 23(k) "a member will be called to order . . . [if they speak] disrespectfully of Her Majesty or any other member of the Royal Family." Great job in being cautious around one of my favourites there.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to ask a brief question or make a comment.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to make a few comments in second reading in regard to Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act. I think that, by and large, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud pointed out, the Official Opposition seems to see Bill 23 to be in order. I mean, there are a couple of issues that I think it brings up that bear some discussion in regard to ensuring that we have sufficient judicial capacity here in the province of Alberta to deal with cases coming to each of our courts. We know that one of the ongoing challenges that we have in our justice system, not just in Alberta but right across the country, is sufficient capacity to have cases brought forward and executed in a timely, just, and reasonable way. I know that this idea around allowing the age of eligibility for part-time service to be reduced to 55 – I'm not sure where it's at now. It's probably 65, right?

8:30

Ms Pancholi: It's 60.

Mr. Eggen: It's 60. Okay.

So, I mean, that certainly does provide some flexibility and perhaps even allows judges to continue to practise longer because they are given some more space to perhaps be more reflective, and it increases the longevity of people if they choose to work part-time over a longer period of time. But I'm just wondering if the Justice department has done the math to ensure that, you know, we're not going to leave ourselves short. There's nothing worse than having cases that with I believe it's the Jordan principle – is that what it's called?

Ms Pancholi: The Jordan case.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. That's right.

The Jordan case has come down from the federal courts, that compels the timely execution of a case in all courts across the country. You know, that's caused us quite a lot of consternation and problems here in the province of Alberta because we quite simply don't have the space and the time. I saw a case in the news just maybe 48 hours ago or at the end of last week where someone was not given court time and a court case in a timely manner in our second official language, and that person ends up with a suspended sentence or, I guess, no trial. It's the end of it, right? So we want to make sure that we have judicial capacity here in the province of Alberta in both official languages and that we are not compromising that with this Bill 23.

The other part that I wanted to make very brief comments on is just to ensure that the savings that we might incur from the changes in Bill 23 – I mean, they are outlined in the technical briefing that we did get. You know, I just want to make sure that we're not compromising, once again, the integrity of the execution of justice here in the province just for the sake of saving the dollars, as put forward here by the Justice department, right? I see that the potential saving in provincial courts is about \$1.5 million from the '18-19 actuals, which is good. But I don't want to see – \$1.3 million I see. I see the Queen's Bench at \$0.8 million and so forth.

I mean, all of these numbers do add up, but when you consider the time and resources that are put into both our justice system and our police system and our corrections system, then we don't want to, you know, save a dime when we've already spent a dollar kind of thing. I just want to ensure that there's a provision for realizing savings maybe by Bill 23 but also a review process by which we

look to see that we're not, like I say, trying to save a dime when, in fact, we've already spent a dollar in the pursuit of justice and the conviction of criminals here in the province of Alberta.

Those are really the only two things that I wanted to bring forward in regard to Bill 23. I'm just going to skirt right around the whole Queen's Bench to King's Bench issue because I feel sensitivity around that. You know, you always want to be on the right side of the Crown. So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my leave and hope that we might have some of those questions answered by the Minister of Justice.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the hon. member.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate at second reading?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call on the hon. Minister of Energy on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to close debate if she wishes.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you. I just would stand up to close debate. I think we've heard lots of lively debate and comments on this. In respect of time and matter and having heard people voice their opinions on this, I would just simply like to close debate on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

The Chair: Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: I was trying to let the other side stand if they wished, but I suppose.

It is an honour to rise and speak this evening although I have some concerns, as I will outline here, with Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, an interesting name for an omnibus bill that really should be divided into multiple separate bills. I've spoken to this bill in previous conversations and in previous debate in this House, and truly I would argue that nearly each piece of this bill should be argued on its own. I can use the deindexing of AISH as one example, where the indexing of AISH under the previous NDP government, of course, of which I was not a part but was very proud to see the indexing of AISH, was its own separate bill. I am quite troubled by this use of omnibus bills that sort of merges together so many of what should really be separate pieces of legislation. I would argue that it's a sneaky attack. With Bill 21 it's really death by a thousand cuts. As I will outline here tonight, the impacts of Bill 21 are quite far-reaching, just as we saw with Bill 20, a very similar bill in that the impacts on people across this province are tremendous.

I just want to, for the benefit of those watching at home, of which there probably is at least one – some of the measures proposed in Bill 21: temporarily suspending the indexing of benefits for AISH, income support, and the seniors' lodge program; excluding budget officers, systems analysts, auditors, and employees who perform similar functions from bargaining units; reversing the

replacement worker ban; ending the tuition freeze; increasing student loan interest; ending the regulated rate option cap for electricity; allowing changes to the master agreement with the Alberta Medical Association; changes on how municipalities pay for policing; changing how the province uses fine money – I haven't even gone through them all – letting the government have greater oversight over collective bargaining. The list goes on. In fact, I didn't even name them all there.

My point in listing all of those is that these are almost a disparate set of measures that, again, should individually be debated, and I think that's only fair, especially when you are talking about things that truly impact the lives of Albertans. And in the cases of some of the pieces that I want to focus on tonight, they impact the lives of many in my constituency.

If I go back to that first element, temporarily suspending the indexation of benefits for AISH, income support, and the seniors' lodge program – well, I've spoken multiple times about my concerns around the deindexing of AISH. I've heard from many people in my riding who are concerned. I've shared in this House before that in my riding we do have pretty high rates of poverty and have a number of folks who do rely on supports like AISH.

8:40

In fact, I'm glancing at my phone because as I was sitting here earlier, I had someone who I met who receives AISH who messaged me and said that she's really worried, and I haven't responded to her yet. She's concerned about the changes under this government. I would think – I won't say her name because I haven't gotten her permission to share that – that there are many folks just like her out there who are quite concerned. For this Premier to say that it's not onerous and that it's not significant, deindexing AISH: well, again, I've heard from countless folks who would say that absolutely it is. I would love to ask the Premier and his ministers to come and talk to some of those folks who I've heard from who are really worried about how they're going to make ends meet every month. They're relying on that increase for inflation. We know that it's a significant challenge for a lot of them.

Included in that same change in the deindexing is the deindexing to the seniors' lodge program, which, of course, has implications for seniors' affordable housing in our province. I take pride in the fact that I tried – I knocked on every door in my riding or at least tried to, because of course you get a lot of folks who aren't home. We have a number of affordable housing complexes and seniors' lodges as well. I looked at the list because I thought that a lot of these are in my riding, and sure enough, a number of the seniors' lodges are in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. A lot of folks in those buildings are very much struggling to make ends meet from day to day. Again, losing out on the deindexation: there is quite a concern, and I'm not sure – you know, it reminds me that I need to go back and visit some of the folks, some of the friends that I met while campaigning because I bet a lot of them are struggling and are concerned.

I really think – and I think I will speak to this more later tonight – that this government should consider: you're giving \$4.7 billion away to large corporations. You've already demonstrated your lack of compassion for our most vulnerable. I would urge the members opposite to really think about: if the moral imperative isn't there, the economic one should make you reconsider because it's a small, small, small fraction of a budget that we're talking about here that has a huge impact on our most vulnerable. I always like to point out, especially when we're talking about AISH, for instance, the costs that we're going to be paying down the line by not providing proper supports now. I worry, and I think that if you're not able to make that small financial sacrifice of something like indexing to

inflation, I get quite alarmed. I would urge the members opposite to reconsider, particularly when it comes to the deindexing of those benefits.

What I would like to do is speak to the next point that I feel is quite resonant, and it's quite relevant today, and that's ending the tuition freeze for three years. Now, I recall in this House not too long ago the Minister of Advanced Education saying something to the effect of: students were asking us to lift the tuition freeze. I thought: oh, my goodness. That is some interesting malarkey, because I can't imagine postsecondary students asking to pay more tuition.

In the early 2000s, when I was an undergraduate student, I remember there being a few protests at the university. I don't remember protests at the Legislature but at the university, for sure. We had a pretty active students' union at the time. I looked back in a little bit of a moment of reflection today as I heard the protests were quite robust today as well. We're possibly going back to the era of PC cuts, but in fact the cuts to postsecondary education under this UCP government are even more extreme. I wasn't able to be at the rallies. I would have loved to have been at the rallies because, gosh, my life has been a lot of rallying lately, and I hate to miss them. Unfortunately, I was in the private members' committee meeting while it was going on.

I did read a couple of news stories, and one quote actually quite resonated with me. Students at both MacEwan and the University of Alberta, both of which are reporting huge shortfalls, \$44 million and \$17 million respectively – rallies were held at each campus. One student, Eunah Cha, a second-year international student in the Faculty of Nursing, voiced her concern about more expensive tuition. She said: I'm frustrated, I'm angry, and I'm very worried because of the tuition increasing and not being able to keep up with it; I don't know if education is going to be something that I can access next year. How disheartening is it that we have university students who aren't sure if they're going to be able to return next year because of the increases? For this minister to say that he's hearing that kids, that university students wanted this or that postsecondary students want this tuition increase is absolutely farcical. I think that students like Eunah are speaking out, and I hope they continue to speak out. What impact will it have if multiple students are facing the same experiences as Eunah, that they do in fact have to drop out?

I had a university student actually chat with me the other day. That student is at MacEwan University, in fact, and they've already made the decision that they're not going back to school next year. I tried to reason with them and say: you know, is there any way you can try to reconsider that? They had made the decision that it just wouldn't be affordable, that they'd have to work instead.

Part of that person's rationale was also around student loans, that they're already shouldering student loans, which brings me to the next point, the next measure in Bill 21 that's quite troubling, and that's increasing student loan interest by 1 per cent. Again, what message are we sending to young people, to future generations, to some students that are already struggling like Eunah? "Oh, by the way, you know, your tuition is going up, and if you need a student loan, if you have to have a student loan, well, you know what? Your interest is going to be going up."

I think that if we recap all the attacks on postsecondary students – I'm sure that my colleague from Edmonton-North West has been hearing from hundreds of folks impacted by the attack on postsecondary education. Let's just list these: the tuition freeze being lifted; Bill 20 speaks to the loss of the education and tuition tax credits; the student loan increase, which I just talked about. I think, again, the minister might have noted in the House here that it's only going to be about \$15 a month, that, you know, it's a nothing sort of thing when you break it down. Again, it's that same

sort of rhetoric, just like with AISH recipients: ah, it's only, like, 30 bucks a month, right?

Again, if you're living in a situation where you are having to make ends meet day to day, where you don't know where your next meal necessarily is coming from, every dollar does add up. I know that's not the experience of every student, but it is the experience of some. These are the students that we need to be thinking about. I just wonder, you know: how the heck are students today surviving when they're facing these financial barriers, and what's the motivation – gosh, what's the motivation? – for young people to engage in postsecondary?

I mean, I've talked about my experience as a high school teacher and being in rural Alberta, and part of my role was that I was an academic counsellor for a little while. I would try make sure that they had enough credits, and I would try to encourage students to go on to postsecondary. A lot of them just wanted to get out and work – there's no problem with that – but in other cases I met some kids who just didn't think it was financially viable: it's better if I go work for a bit so that I can make some money to go to postsecondary. But we know, the statistics show that if they go to work for a little while with the hopes of going to postsecondary, often students won't actually go back if they're gainfully employed. If they're not, that's a different story.

8:50

Nonetheless, you know, I had a lot of conversations trying to convince kids, students to engage in postsecondary, whether it was pursuing a trade at NAIT or going into university but really thinking about broadening their horizons, if for no other reason, as someone who grew up in rural Alberta myself, than to leave the small towns, the village, in fact, that I was at that time teaching in, to go see a little bit more of the world, even if that world is just 120 kilometres down the road in Edmonton.

I think about those students, and I think about how many other high school teachers right now are having those conversations and trying to convince young people to access postsecondary. Students are saying: "Well, why would I, right? You know, why would I when tuition is so high, when student loan interest has increased?" Yeah. The list goes on. The list goes on. Again, I would ask this government, in this piece of the bill as well, to think about this. I think it's a bit of an alarm bell going off already, with university students starting to protest and with many folks starting to speak out with their concerns as well because, to reiterate, it's an investment in the future, for sure.

You know, one of the other pieces that I find quite troubling in Bill 21 is the following: allowing the government to have greater oversight over collective bargaining. We've seen already a few attacks on workers from this government. In my short tenure as an MLA I've witnessed that. We had Bill 9, where there was an attack on the constitutional right to collectively bargain. We've seen already that this government hasn't been friendly to those public-sector employees, and I'm very much worried about further attacks. I'm worried. You know, I've heard from countless folks in the public sector. I've heard from a whole heck of a lot of teachers and nurses, teachers in particular.

Of course, it's something that's close to my heart, close to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West. We were both teachers, so I think we probably disproportionately hear from a lot of teachers as well who are feeling quite disheartened. As I said in the House not too long ago – I gave a member's statement talking about how teachers are reaching out and telling me that they're disheartened and they're feeling deflated. You know, I try to rally them, and I try to encourage them to keep speaking out and to ask their MLAs questions, but then the attacks keep coming, right? The

attacks on their pensions, for instance. As I stated in the House prior, this isn't about pensions. This is just one piece of it. It's about disrespect. It's about feeling continually disrespected by this government. In Bill 21 we see further reach into collective bargaining and into the constitutional rights of some of Alberta's workers.

In fact, I wanted to share a little bit of a letter I received from a constituent. She was fine with me sharing a little part of this. Actually, I've got a few letters, so maybe I'll share this first one. This is a message from Brynn,* who said: you know, I'm worried that Bill 20 and Bill 21 are going to have serious consequences for my family. She notes that she is a public service worker. Her ministry did get a bit of increase in the budget, but she's heard that there will be an attack on her pay. She points out: actually, I'm a recent graduate, and I've got student loan payments that I'm making. She's saying, you know, that student loan payments are actually going to go up now.

What else do we see? We see an increase in tuition. She also, being a graduate herself – she's an older woman who went back to university. She actually has a daughter who's also in university, in her second year at the University of Alberta. She's got another child who's in high school. Now, you know, she's heard from other folks who kind of attack public-sector workers and say: well, hey, we in the private sector had to deal with that as well. She says: yeah, I get that, but I've only worked with the public sector for a year, and at least in the private sector I had a bit of an increase, a 1 per cent increase. She says that she's worried. She says that she's worried for her financial livelihood. She said: losing \$300 a month in my family's budget will not be sustainable for my family.

I think that that's an important story to share. She's quite concerned. She's someone who went back, jeopardized a lot to go back to school as a mature student, thinking, you know, that it would help her, that it would further her in her career. Now she's facing multiple burdens, right? She's facing the burden of having to pay for her postsecondary education through her student loans, on which the interest rates are of course going up. She's got children, one who's in university and one who's planning to go to university, and she has just established herself in the public service. She's fresh there, and she's worried about attacks on her pay. She doesn't mention it here, but I'm sure she's also worried about job loss. We know that across a number of ministries there are job losses and that there will be more job losses because we've asked about some of those in estimates.

I don't believe that her story is unique. I think that a lot of folks – as I said, we've heard from teachers, heard from a number of nurses as well who are concerned, right? This idea – and this is what a lot of nurses and teachers tell me: you know, we get attacked, with people saying that we have high pay and that we have a pay cut coming to us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate your somehow being able to pick me out of all the people that jumped out. I really appreciate your being able to do that. This evening we're speaking about Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, which, quite honestly, I think I'd want to rename to An Act to Make Life More Difficult for Albertans. There are a host of changes in Bill 21 that are very, very problematic, but before I even get to those changes, I just want to talk about how Bill 21 has even been put together.

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

You see, Madam Chair, there are members on the government side who were members during the 29th Legislature. I remember that when the former NDP government brought in some legislation around labour, those individuals were very, very upset because they felt that that piece of legislation was an omnibus bill. You know, they wanted to argue, to separate things out, and whatnot, yet when I look at Bill 21 – and, by the way, this is just one piece of legislation that we've seen introduced. There are four omnibus bills before us. I think I've said this before in the Chamber. When you're prepared to stand up to criticize the way somebody is proceeding with something and then when it's your chance to come around and do that and you don't do something different – you do the exact same thing or even worse – that tends to be a little bit, shall we say, disappointing. I certainly saw a lot of those comments, so when I see four pieces of omnibus legislation before this House, it seems a little bit hypocritical on behalf of the government to be rolling these out the way they are.

But the reality is that here we are on Bill 21, a very robust piece of omnibus legislation, changing everything from indexation for AISH recipients to changes to exclude various different people from collective bargaining. We're seeing things like the lifting of tuition freezes, an increase in student loans, allowing the Health minister to place conditions on new practitioner identification numbers, changing how the province uses fine money it collects on behalf of municipalities. We're seeing proposals here around greater oversight of collective bargaining with public-sector employees, including even the length of the agreements: you know, no bad-faith bargaining possibilities there. We're seeing changes with the master agreement to the Alberta Medical Association, changes to regulations about how municipalities pay for policing. We have changes here that are encompassing a very broad spectrum of topics, which, as I mentioned before, is a very problematic position that I think this government has taken given how it's viewed omnibus legislation in the past.

9:00

As a riding in Edmonton that happens to have the three, all the high schools north of the Yellowhead freeway, I get the opportunity to chat with students all the time. They tell me about their aspirations for postsecondary education and all the great things that – you know, when they get through school, they want to be able to come out and essentially change the world, Madam Chair. It's very, very exciting to listen to. It's very, very invigorating right up until they see things like tuition that could be rising at dramatic rates and student loan interest going up. Certainly, through all of those times that I've been able to talk with those students and even the students that are currently attending postsecondary education with those same kinds of dreams and aspirations, I have yet to find one student that has said to me: please, raise my tuition; please, make me pay more on my loans. I stay awake at night thinking about the day when that will come, but, funnily enough, I just have not had a single one of those conversations before. So when I hear suggestions that these are some of the things that Albertans are looking for, I really question whether those conversations really took place because I have yet to find one. Like I said, I have three high schools in my riding. That's a lot of students that are eyeing postsecondary education.

The next piece that I have some significant problems with is the deindexation of benefits for AISH recipients. We've heard comments, of course, including by our Premier, that this will not be onerous on these recipients, and I highly beg to differ. This will be onerous. You know, to somebody who potentially has a very solid six-figure income from one source, also making a very good six-figure income here in the province, sure, maybe to that kind of an

individual \$30 or \$40 isn't onerous whatsoever. They probably could head out and maybe spend that kind of money on lunch. But for an individual that's on AISH, that is a significant amount of money. So when I see things like our Premier, who has argued very, very vigorously in the past, during his time as an MP representing a Calgary riding, against deindexing – I can't remember some of the words that the Premier used at the time, but I can assure you, Madam Chair, that they were not very complimentary around how bad the idea of deindexing is.

Now we have here in Bill 21 deindexing. One minute we're saying something over here; another minute we're saying something over there, kind of like the whole concept of this omnibus legislation. When we look at potentially what this is going to do, we're talking over the coming years into the '22-23 fiscal year. You know, I wonder what AISH recipients in this province could do with an extra \$300 million in their pockets. I suspect that they could probably live lives in greater dignity and respect, something that they deserve because they don't have the very high six-figure secondary income or a high six-figure income here in the province.

I think that the saying is that sometimes a society can be judged on how it treats its most vulnerable, and AISH recipients here in our province are certainly one of our most vulnerable in our society. For us to look at this and say, "Well, this is not onerous; this'll be fine": I think that we really, really need to start checking our moral compasses here, and we really, really need to rethink this decision about deindexing.

Now, when I start looking at some of the labour changes, you know, I've said multiple times in this House that my background is in labour. I very proudly come from labour. I spent the last 26 years fighting for workers to get a fair deal, to be treated with dignity and respect, to be able to work in a safe work environment, to be paid a good wage, to receive decent benefits. Those individuals will then come and build lives here in the province of Alberta. They'll spend it in our local economies, and everybody prospers because of it.

But the reality is that when you look at the labour world, one of the most fundamental things that takes place between employer and a bargaining unit is fair bargaining. When I see things like the replacement worker ban, when I see things like oversight of the collective bargaining agreement, including even the length of that, that is bargaining in bad, bad faith, Madam Chair.

I think that we are going to see that public-sector workers, as these things potentially are rolled out, will become very, very annoyed with this government. Again, I'm trying to use somewhat good parliamentary language here, but these workers are going to get very, very upset. You know, I think that some of the protests that we've seen out on the front steps of this Legislature in just a short six months – I've always admitted that we certainly had our protests when we were government and on the other side there, but the number and the size that I've seen in just the last six months is potentially something to be very, very concerned about.

I don't know how else to urge the government to rethink this direction. They talk about wanting to create an atmosphere that businesses want to come to, that businesses want to invest in this province, but I think that they're going to have a very, very hard time if all they're seeing is labour unrest. They're going to see a workforce that is very, very unhappy, and I think that might end up giving them pause to come and invest here.

9:10

You know, during the election we saw that province where we're going to grow jobs, we're going to grow the economy, but we're not going to do it by treating our most vulnerable with disrespect,

by cutting services that Albertans rely on and creating a toxic work environment that will discourage that investment and that job creation from coming here to Alberta.

We need to really rethink our position on this and how we're moving forward. Again, we're trying to say one thing over here, but our actions are doing something totally counterproductive. I've probably mentioned this during some other debates in this House, where we seem to be stuck, where we've got this narrative, you know, of a direction that we're going to go to, which I suppose in theory sounds plausible, but we're making decisions, we're heading in directions that are counterproductive to that.

A simple, quick example of that in Bill 20 is around the tax credit. Again, we want to create jobs, but we're driving companies out. We're stopping them from expanding. So there's this narrative that's beginning to form very, very clearly, and I think it's going to hurt Alberta in the long run if we want to try to create jobs to grow the economy. Labour peace is one of the components that businesses will look at when they're thinking about investing in this province. They want to know the workforce is looked after, yet we're doing things like deindexing our AISH recipients. It just sends the wrong signals, Madam Chair.

When I'm also looking at things around how municipalities will pay for policing, I've heard some very, very significant concerns from municipal leaders around this topic and how that could affect the safeties that we enjoy within our communities. Absolutely, there is always room to do better, to provide better service, to make sure that our citizens are safe at all times. It's not something where you make one simple move, you wash your hands, and you say: look what I did; everything is fixed. It's constantly evolving. But if we don't give our municipalities the ability to fund those decisions, that will have a negative impact on our local communities, which then will also have an impact on businesses that are looking to invest here in the province, which will affect our ability to grow the economy and create jobs. Again, yet another example of how we've said we want to do one thing, but the decisions we're making are completely counterproductive to that.

Changes to fines and how they're collected: I don't remember over the last four years hearing from city councillors that that was something that needs to be addressed and changed. So I kind of wonder where we ended up, I guess, getting that impression that that was the type of change we need to make.

Then ending the rate cap on electricity: we've certainly seen other jurisdictions. What was that line? I think, you know, everything is bigger in Texas. Yeah, including their electricity bills and the number of swings that they get. Here we have the government that's talking about, "Well, we have the backs of Albertans; we're going to create stability for them," yet we're duplicating a jurisdiction that does not have that. So we're again in that position of conflicting ways of doing things. We very, very clearly have seen down in those areas where they have brownouts. They have potential blackouts. I bet if we started asking Albertans if that was something that they want to have, we probably would not find a willingness to have that kind of thing.

In regard to Bill 21, I just simply cannot support this legislation, this piece of omnibus legislation that was highly, highly criticized by serving members that sit in here today from the 29th Legislature. It is, as I said, An Act to Make Life More Difficult for Albertans. If we are seriously going to say that we're trying to make life better for them, that we have their backs, that we're going to create jobs, and that we're going to grow the economy, this bill certainly is making decisions that are completely counterproductive to that. I would urge all the members in this House to vote against this legislation. Let's get to work on actually trying to create jobs instead of losing over 27,000 at this point. Let's actually work

towards growing the economy instead of stalling it out. Let's get away from that narrative that we can be a better society if we treat our most vulnerable a lot better, because this bill certainly won't do that.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Eggen: Well, thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words here in committee in regard to Bill 21. Listening to quite a number of members speaking about how difficult it is to, perhaps, look at this bill in its totality – it is a classic definition of an omnibus bill – and the scope by which it moves around the province, both figuratively and literally, making fundamental changes to so many important services and responsibilities that we have here in this Chamber and here as a provincial Legislature, it becomes painfully obvious, I think, that what needs to be done is to look for separation between some of these ideas that are really quite disparate as well. Just listening to the Member for Edmonton-Decore talk about the range of what Bill 21 tries to accomplish: it has a regulated rate option, ending the regulated rate option for electricity, and then it talks about suspending indexation for AISH. It talks about the agreements with the Alberta Medical Association and then suddenly jumps around to municipalities and municipal taxes. For legislators to try to get your head around these is not easy, and for Albertans and the public I think it's definitely confusing. The use of this sort of omnibus bill, I think, is a poor choice. I think that if it's not deliberately trying to confuse the issue, then certainly it does make it a whole lot more complicated.

Madam Chair, as I had to pass forward to you some time ago, I just want to make a request that when we deal with Bill 21, the votes be separated so that we could vote on them separately as follows. Each of these is a separate section, then: section 1 as a separate unit, sections 2 and 17 as a separate unit, sections 3 and 5 as a separate unit, section 4 as a separate unit, sections 6 and 10 as a separate unit, sections 7 and 8 as a separate unit, section 9 as a separate unit, section 11 as a separate unit, sections 12 and 18 as a separate unit, section 13 as a separate unit, section 14 as a separate unit, and sections 15 and 16 as a separate unit. So I am seeing 12 delineations here, taking Bill 21 into its component parts for the purposes of voting. I have submitted that to the table and to you, Madam Chair, and I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Thank you.

9:20

The Chair: Hon. member, thank you for requesting to separate the votes on Bill 21 in the sections as mentioned. For clarity's sake I am pleased to grant the request. I will also add that there is a schedule remaining for the sections that you didn't mention, that we'll vote on after the sections, and the individual sections blocked together will be numerical, starting from A to K.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. That works for me. Can I make further comments on it?

The Chair: Yeah. Please proceed. You still have 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Sure. Again, I think that this is going to provide some clarity both for this Chamber and for members of the public. We know that there are literally, let's say, thousands of students that are dealing with the aspects of Bill 21 in regard to tuition and student loans. We saw hundreds of young students – well, actually,

students of all ages – on the steps of the Legislature here today at lunch talking about the elements of Bill 21 that will definitely affect their lives both financially and in terms of the quality of their education. This lifting of the tuition cap will result, from the government's own budget, that we debated in estimates last week or the week before, in a 21 per cent increase to tuition.

I know that already tuition is not cheap, and people know that, too, so they make plans for themselves and their families. Sometimes you do it for many years. I know that in my own family we saved for many years with an expectation that postsecondary was going to be expensive but not out of range if we could plan ahead. Now suddenly, if you change the rules midway and within the next three years have a 21 per cent increase to that premium to go to a trades college or go to NAIT or SAIT or, you know, Olds College – right? – Lethbridge, you are inevitably creating a barrier, a ceiling so that some students will simply not be able to go, even if they and their family had been planning already and saving to make that switch. You know, in adult education it even becomes more, I think, sensitive because, of course, for older people going back to postsecondary training – let's say that they're going to go to a trades college and learn pipefitting or electricity or get an arts degree or go to law school – the expense of postsecondary education is a very, very important decision to work through.

If you start increasing prices – certainly, it's reasonable that tuition can change and go up over time. If you tie it or you pair it to the consumer price index for expenses in the province of Alberta, then, you know, I don't think that's unreasonable to have tuition changing to meet the inflationary pressures that might be had here in the province of Alberta. But having 7 per cent a year for three years, 21 per cent: I mean, that far exceeds any projection around how inflation is growing and other factors like that. I believe that, you know, while we do need to fund and make sure we're always looking for efficiency in all aspects of what the government funds and with postsecondary especially, I can't help but notice and I think the hundreds of people on the steps today and the tens of thousands of students notice that this government seemed to single out postsecondary education particularly for cuts and fee increases that far exceed either inflationary pressures or any other measurements that you could possibly bring forward to our postsecondary institutions.

You know, having the tuition go up that, like I said before, one, we will exclude many people from making a choice to go to postsecondary education. Two, we will be putting the burden of debt onto students in an inordinate and unfair sort of manner as well.

So there you are. You show up, and you pay that extra 21 per cent or so forth, Madam Chair, and then you're hit at the end with an increase to the interest rates of that student loan, that you incurred to get that degree or to get that trade training or what have you, at the end. I mean, we already know that student debt is a looming problem that excludes many people from making choices around taking postsecondary education but also is a burden of debt that people carry around with them for many, many years.

Perhaps I'm learning quickly as the Official Opposition critic for postsecondary education that, you know, student debt is real, it's tangible, and it is making life more difficult for young people. An increase by 1 per cent, let's say, on a \$30,000 student loan over time is a couple of thousand dollars more, and often people are actually incurring more than a \$30,000 student loan debt. I'm learning very quickly here now. I was with some students a couple of days ago that told me that they had more like either \$70,000 and \$125,000, respectively, for their student debt and had just finished their bachelors' degrees, right? They're looking at \$3,000, \$4,000,

\$5,000 more in interest payments because of this choice that this government made in this Bill 21.

Again, you know, it's a way by which for us to at least shine a light on each of these individual elements, each of these individual elements in Bill 21 that have a profound effect on Alberta families. I'm glad that you did grant us the opportunity to have separate voting avenues here with this omnibus bill.

You know, another one that I just was thinking about, and I think the hon. member on this side will probably shine a greater light on it, is in regard to this electricity rate, right? We know that the ending of the regulated option rate cap for electricity really puts us back to the bad old days in regard to having a reliable source of power and a reliable price for that power as well. Here in the province of Alberta it wasn't very long ago where we had that market rate that caused chaos, both chaos through speculators just playing the futures game on electricity and jacking up the price of electricity but also not encouraging capacity to be built into the market as well.

Here we are in this one other aspect of Bill 21, ending the regulated rate option for electricity, you know, and exposing both families and commercial electricity users to the vagaries of a market system that is proven to – and with very expensive electricity. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore said, in Texas they've suffered through this experiment and came back to look to a regulated rate because people were exposed to speculation, unfair speculation, on the rates for electricity.

Those are just two examples, Madam Chair, of things that we need to examine more closely, more specifically. I'm glad that you gave us leave to divide this into 12 different voting sections as well as the overall piece that needs to be voted.

I will cede the floor to others that, hopefully, will shine more light and more specific light on how we might be able to make each of these subject areas start working for Albertans rather than the punitive measures that Bill 21 represents at this time.

Thank you.

9:30

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 21, which really is the Making Life Less Affordable Act. It's my pleasure today to be able speak about something that I think is going to be so important for this House, and I'm hoping that every single member of this House will give support because we know that with the Americanization of the energy market and the elimination of the regulated rate cap, families are going to pay more for electricity. It's going to cost more, it's going to be less stable, and it's going to be a really bad system that doesn't allow us to protect the best interests of Albertans. Instead, we'll be giving money away, as the government has already done with their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout to the wealthiest corporations.

I'm hoping we can make a change together that's going to make this bill better, so with your indulgence, Madam Chair, I have an amendment to present. I'll wait for it to be distributed to the table.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-South, please proceed.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. My amendment is that I move that the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in subsection (2) by striking out "November 30, 2019" and substituting "December 31, 2019" and in subsection (4) by striking out "November 30, 2019" and substituting "December 31, 2019."

You know, Madam Chair, I think this is a very simple amendment. What it does is that it delays the removal of the rate cap on the regulated rate option here in Alberta for the electricity system. I think it's very important that we think very carefully about this because this amendment ensures that the rate cap will continue until the end of the year.

The reason I'm trying to bring this forward is because what this bill does is that it will potentially allow electricity companies and energy companies to go back and, at the end of December, raise and back charge for electricity to ratepayers. So electricity payers at the end of the year, during Christmas, during the holidays, when they're trying to spend time with their families, will actually end up paying more for power. In fact, the way the bill is currently worded, if we don't do this, they could actually end up paying more for a bill they've already paid, right? The way the existing bill is, without this amendment, is that a retroactive charge would have to be adjusted on their next bill. So for power they've already paid, they could end up paying twice because this bill eliminates the rate cap before Christmas.

What I'm saying, Madam Chair, is that I don't think that's fair. I think we should give the stability at least through the holidays so people can spend time with their families without worrying that this Americanization, this dangerous, risky ideological experiment in electricity won't hurt their family at least to the end of this year, at least through Christmas.

We know that without the rate cap families can pay significantly more for electricity. We've seen that. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Decore spoke about how in many of these American systems like in Texas, where this exists, it's a failed experiment. Electricity costs more, and it's simply something that does not work and something that is not in the interests of making the electricity market work for consumers.

We want consumers to at least get through this year. I think it's important if the government is insistent on bringing in this risky American ideological system, making profitable corporations more profitable, giving \$4.7 billion away for no new jobs and sending jobs to the United States, in fact, Madam Chair. If that's what the government is interested in, at least let's protect families through Christmas. At least let's protect families and not back charge them, retroactively charge them more money for electricity they've already paid for. At least let's just wait until the new year because then families can start to assess their situation again next year and families will have that predictability to be able to assess their situation next year.

I think it's a very fair amendment, Madam Chair. I think it's very fair that we're going to be able to look at the market again and families will be able to assess how their financial situation will be in the new year. I think that's something that's very important. I think it's important that we can give that stability to families because we know that by eliminating the rate cap, power bills will go up. We've seen this before.

We saw this risky Americanization of the power system when it was first introduced over a decade ago. We saw the rolling blackouts. We saw the price spikes. We continue to see how that can affect families and cost them more. I'm asking for the government to show some heart. I'm asking for them to show enough heart to let families get through Christmas and the holiday season, to let them get into the new year and then make those assessments on how this is going to affect their families. It's not a significant change, Madam Chair. It's really administrative. It changes two dates in the entire bill. I'm not asking for the world. I hope that the minister will be able to support this, and I hope that the government caucus will be able to support this because I'm asking that we allow families just those four extra weeks, allow

them to have that stability, allow them to say: we won't get hit with more right as we're trying to buy the presents to put under the tree this year, right as we're trying to make sure that we have enough to squirrel away and make sure that our kids can have the best Christmas they can.

Life is getting more expensive under this government. They're raising personal income taxes. They're giving money away to corporations, \$4.7 billion to corporations, in fact. They're making electricity more expensive. They're making tuition more expensive. They're making school fees more expensive. They're making busing more expensive. All of these things are getting more expensive for families, Madam Chair. I'm asking today that we mitigate some of that. If we can make their electricity rates stay stable at least past Christmas into the new year, past the holidays into the new year, that would be something that I think would show compassion, would show heart, would show that we really do care and that we are here to try and do good things. It's not something that's going to significantly alter this bill. Again, it's two lines, not even two full lines. It's two dates. It's one month.

It's enough that we'd be able to look at it and say: hey, maybe you can go get that new toy. Last year I know it was Hatchimals, and I know that there were some people paying hundreds of dollars for these Hatchimals. Perhaps this won't make the difference for that, but what will make the difference is that families will be able to go out and make those decisions themselves. They will be able to know what their bills will be. They will be able to have that stability. They will be able to go out and say: "We know that we have these things to assess in the new year. We will be able to get through at least one more Christmas. We will get through at least one more holiday season." The family can get together and have those discussions, and they will be able to have that stability. That's something that is compassionate. I think it's something that's fair, and it's something that I'm hoping all members will be able to support. It would be unreasonable to say that we're going to give \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations and then take money away from families over the Christmas holidays. That's what I think is unreasonable, Madam Chair.

We're telling families that their rates are going to go up, that we're not going to protect them from rate hikes right in the holiday season, right when people are supposed to be happy spending time with their families and enjoying their holidays. What we're going to do with the removal of the rate cap is go in and make life more expensive. We've already raised tuition. We've already raised school fees. We've already made class sizes larger. We've raised personal income taxes. We've done all these things that make life more expensive.

But today we can make a change right now that at least sees families through to the new year, at least sees that they can buy that Hatchimal – I know it's not going to be Hatchimals again, Madam Chair, but they can buy whatever they need to buy this holiday – and that Santa really will come. This amendment in some cases, I believe, will actually save Christmas, basically. We will be able to have Santa show up again for some of these families. That's the difference we're talking about. In some cases for some families it could be as little as \$10, \$20, \$30, or it could be as much as a couple of hundred dollars. I think the government might be scoffing a bit, but for some families that \$30 is the difference for their holiday. That will be the difference between whether they can buy the presents or not. That will be the difference between whether they can get that ham for dinner or not.

Madam Chair, I think that is what we are here to do. We are here to try and make life better. We are here to try and be compassionate and have a soul. I'm hoping we're able to go and save Christmas by making sure that families can have a stable electricity rate into the

new year. Again, I'm not asking for the world. I'm not asking for us to eliminate this change. The government has made it very clear that they will be moving forward with these changes, and I've accepted that.

9:40

What I'm asking is: instead, can we please let families evaluate this in the new year? Can we please give them that extra 31 days? Because if they can evaluate in the new year, then that's a decision that they'll be able to make throughout the rest of the year and squirrel that 30 bucks away for Christmas next year. But this year we can still save Christmas. We can still make sure Santa Claus shows up for every single family. We can still make sure that kids aren't getting coal instead of whatever the greatest toy will be, Madam Chair.

Again, I think that for some families, whether it's \$10, \$20, \$30, \$100, or \$200, Madam Chair, it's going to make a big difference. It's something that will make a significant difference for these families. We know that this is important because we've had families telling us that the regulated rate option, if the cap is removed, is a scary thing. We've seen it in other jurisdictions. We've seen it in Texas. We've seen it everywhere, basically, that the energy-only market doesn't work.

We've seen right here in Alberta that it doesn't work. Those rolling blackouts – again, I've spoken about that on this bill before. I remember as a child that we'd have to light candles because we wouldn't have the power. The rolling blackouts would come because the energy rate spikes weren't sustainable, because the system was designed to fail. It was designed to make profitable corporations more profitable. It was designed just like the \$4.7 billion corporate no-jobs handout, to make profitable corporations wealthier instead of trying to work for families, instead of trying to provide stability for families, instead of trying to provide quality services for families.

Madam Chair, I'm worried that that's what eliminating the rate cap will do, actually. I really do believe that eliminating the rate cap will make life more expensive, that it will make life less sustainable, and that it will make life more unstable for families. We can at least stave that off till after the holidays. We can at least stave that off till after Christmas. We can at least stave that off until the new year. I think that's a very reasonable ask. I think it's something that's very reasonable because, again, it's only two dates in this entire bill, right? It's only two small dates. It's not even a significant change.

Sometimes we come in here, Madam Chair – I know that government members, when they were in the opposition, did this to us, and I know that we've done this as opposition. Sometimes you make changes like five years or 10 years or months and months and months. That's not what we're asking for. We're asking to save Christmas. We're asking for one month to make this change. I think that's a very reasonable ask. I think that families will appreciate it. I think that all of our constituents will appreciate it and will know that they can have stability at least into the new year. Families will be able to understand what their bills will look like at least for another month and that we aren't going to be going back and retroactively pulling money out of their pockets right after their Christmas bills come due. I think that no family would appreciate that, whether they bought the most expensive toy or not this year. No family will appreciate, as their bills are coming due at the end of next month, that they'll have to pay more, that they have no stability, that they don't know what their rates are going to be. They don't know whether the power bill is going to be \$100 or \$500, Madam Chair. I think that's very unreasonable.

I think what we need to do is have compassion. We need to understand that for so many families in every single one of our

ridings this could make the difference between whether they're going to have a stressful Christmas, frankly, a Christmas that – I mean, sometimes, you know, we'll joke that meeting with the family is stressful no matter what it is, but really in this case this is the difference for some families of whether they're going to be able to have that meeting, whether they're going to be able to have that Christmas dinner, whether those parents are going to be giving gifts to their children on behalf of Santa Claus, of course. For all the kids listening at home, Santa Claus definitely needs us to save your Christmas, Madam Chair.

Certainly, I think we want to make sure that we can have a real impact on families when we bring bills like this forward. We want to be able to have a real impact on our communities when moving this forward, and it's something that's very clear. We have that ability today. We have the ability today to bring stability to families at least until 2020. I'm not saying that this needs to be a five-year amendment or a 10-year amendment or 20-year amendment, as we've seen when they're stunts, right? When this type of amendment, Madam Chair, is a stunt, then it's a 75-year amendment with the date changes.

That's not what happened today. What happened is that we want one month. We want to be able to say to families that we fought, we changed, and we decided that you deserve to have stability. You deserve to know what your bill will be at the end of the month. You deserve to understand what your bill will look like. We know that energy usage is going to go up over the Christmas holidays, as is normal, Madam Chair. We know that that type of change happens with the seasons. It's wintertime here in Alberta, and as we know, it gets cold in wintertime, so energy usage goes up.

But what we want to be with that energy usage is that at least the families will know what they're expecting to pay, that at least families can then create a budget. If we bring this change in and we can pass this change, then those families, knowing now that they have stability until the end of the year, will be able to build their entire holiday budget, right? They'll be able to build and understand. If they've got one child or two children or five children, whatever it is, Madam Chair, they'll be able to know exactly how much they can budget for those families, and they'll be able to understand, for those families, exactly what that means for their household. That's the reasonable thing, right? That's the thing that makes the most sense.

We know that this Christmas season is going to be a tough one because this government is giving \$4.7 billion away to wealthy corporations while raising every single fee, whether it's your car registration or registering an RV or whether it's tuition or personal income taxes. If you're a family on AISH, then you don't get the indexing any more. Whatever it is, we know that this government is basically making life more expensive for every single family. But can we at least try to make sure that when they're heating their homes and using electricity this year, they're going to know what they're paying so that we can have a holiday season where they don't have to worry about that, Madam Chair, where they don't have to worry about what that bill is going to look like at the end of December, where they don't have to worry about how they're going to budget and afford those toys?

That's the type of decision, those are the type of people that we affect when we make change in this House, right? When we make laws and bills and debate these things in this House, we should all remember that we're talking about real people. We're talking about families. We're talking about families with children. We're talking about people who really do have to make these types of decisions. I know, Madam Chair, families like mine. When I was younger, my family was the one that had to make decisions like this, right? We didn't have all the flashiest toys when I was

younger, but it's families like mine that'll benefit the most from this because when we talk about that stability, when we talk about making that \$30 difference, if that's what this works out to – 6.8 cents is the cap right now, or \$68. When we're talking about if it's 30 bucks or if it's 50 bucks, whatever it is, that's a Christmas toy for two kids right there. That's the type of difference we're talking about. It's families that live in every single one of our ridings that will see this difference.

Let's get them through the holidays. Let's make sure they can have a fun holiday that their kids will remember for the rest of their lives. Let's make sure we can have an environment that is friendly. Let's make sure we can have an environment that encourages this and allows those families to understand what the impacts will be because you can't bring it back, right? If you ruin one Christmas, that kid is going to remember it forever. If you give \$4.7 billion away to wealthy corporations, raise their school fees, make busing more expensive, make tuition more expensive, make their personal income taxes more expensive, make their electricity more expensive, all of these things more expensive and then decide that we're going to go back in and take money away from you at the end of the holiday season, at the end of the Christmas season, that's what's a little bit heartless, Madam Chair. That's what's kind of heartless.

We can do this. We can make this change. We can make it better. We can stop some of this bleeding. We don't have to go to every single family and take money out of their pockets. That's not what we have to do today. We have the opportunity to make it better right here, right now. This amendment, Madam Chair, is a minor amendment. It changes the date by one month. It allows these families to know for the next month what their power bill can be expected to be. It allows them to know a maximum limit on the power bill. That's something that families will be able to work with. That's something that's very reasonable.

I think it's something that – there are a number of my colleagues, for example, who are social workers, and they'll have experienced families that this will make a huge difference for. This would make a massive difference in their lives because perhaps they do have two or three kids, and knowing how much they can spend and afford to spend over this holiday season, whether it's on, "Should they should get the extra-large fancy maple-glazed ham?" or whether it's on, "Should they get the newest toy?" – whatever it is, these are the families that need to know these things because they need to make those types of decisions. Those are the decisions that families need to make before the bills come due, right? If you go in after and make life more expensive after the invoices have already been issued, then it doesn't work because now they're in trouble. That's where we run into trouble.

9:50

Once again, I think we have an opportunity here to save Christmas. I think we have an opportunity here to make the holidays okay for families. I think we have an opportunity here not to go in and steal from every single family, to show some compassion, to have a heart, to go in and make life more affordable, to go in and actually tell these families that we care about them. I think that's what we can all stand up here to do, and I hope we can all agree on this. I hope the government understands that this is very detrimental to families. I hope they understand that by delaying it by only one month, we can make Christmas okay again. These families will be able to budget properly, they'll be able to have the stability that they need, and they'll be able to understand all those types of issues.

I'm looking forward to hearing from government members. I hope they'll be able to enlighten me, and I hope they'll be able to support me, because a minor change like this: we have the

opportunity right now to make sure these holidays are good memories for generations to last.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. member, Hatchimals were a thing, like, two years ago, not last year.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just respond to that proposed amendment with some information. For electricity customers who choose to stay on the regulated rate option, the elimination of the 6.8-cent rate cap is expected to increase the average residential electricity bill by about \$7 in the month of December – about \$7 – for each residential bill. That's all. The cap itself was put into place to hide the volatility created by the previous government's proposed move to a capacity market from the energy-only market. That's why we've removed the rate cap, because we're sticking with the energy-only market.

One last short comment. For those customers who are concerned with the \$7 increase in the month of December by the elimination of the rate cap, there are options to the RRO, and you can choose from more than 30 competitive retailers that offer a fixed-rate contract of less than 6.8 cents.

Again, the cost per electricity bill for the month of December is approximately \$7. For that reason, Madam Chair, we will not be supporting the proposed amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Energy minister getting up and revealing her true intentions for the electricity system with her response to this amendment and also revealing, of course, the continued lack of compassion that we see from this government: "Oh, it's only \$7 this month. Oh, AISH clients are only going to get their benefits reduced by \$30 this month. That's not onerous. Oh, seniors are having their underage dependants kicked off their drug plans. I'm sure they'll be able to afford to pick up the tab." You know, this government is nickel and diming Albertans at every turn. They're told that these costs are small and that any reasonable person should be able to afford them, and they can't.

Yet when we point out, of course, the excessive expenses that the Premier's office is making, flying their friends around for pancake parties, sending the principal secretary to sip champagne with Conservative supporters in London, England, not London, Ontario, just so that we're clear as to which London we're talking about, well, that's perfectly reasonable – in fact, we should have sympathy for this person because he's reduced his salary so greatly, to the lowly amount of \$200,000 a year – and, oh, how wonderful it is that the people of Alberta have this master of the universe who's practically donating his time to work on behalf of the people of Alberta.

You know, it's interesting, with the Energy minister's remarks about the \$7 hit that regular Albertans are going to be faced with continuing this trend of a lack of compassion for the average person trying to make ends meet given this economic climate.

Furthermore, in my remarks and in my colleagues' remarks around moving from the capacity market back to the generation-only market, we had highlighted this tendency, the intent to push people onto these long-term contracts which, study after study has shown, have cost electricity payers more in the long run than staying on the regulated rate option. The Energy minister is

revealing the government's true intent, to continue to soak utility ratepayers by trying to sell them long-term contracts that aren't to their financial benefit. So here we go again. This government is working on behalf of its wealthy donors, the elite owners of the utility companies who stand to make huge profits from these long-term contracts, and doing nothing to protect the average Albertan from seeing a spike in their electricity increases this month and electricity increases going forward.

For those reasons, Madam Chair, I intend to support this amendment, and I intend to let every Albertan know that the Minister of Energy and all of her caucus colleagues display a shocking lack of compassion for the average Albertan and are, you know, working in the interests of the billionaires who run the electricity system in this province and are not interested in protecting average Albertans from getting soaked.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this amendment that was proposed by my colleague. I think it's reasonable to ask for a one-month extension, 31 days, to allow people an opportunity to perhaps reassess some of their bills, to look at some of the things that they might need to cut in the future.

I think that the timing of this is quite fitting, Madam Chair. November is Financial Literacy Month, and I know that out of my office we've been hearing from not only constituents but from people from all over the province who are afraid. They're expressing fear. They're expressing concern when they've seen the release of the budget and how it's going to impact their family, and seeing that one of the many pieces of this omnibus bill is to eliminate the regulated rate cap, people are scared. They know that this is a bill that they have to pay, and when there's some unpredictability in it, it causes fear. Being that it's Financial Literacy Month, we're encouraging people to look out at the resources that are available to them to help them plan for their budget when everything is going up: their cost of insurance is going up, the cost of registering a vehicle is going up, tuition for students is going up.

Unfortunately, some of the things that aren't going up are the funding that several people with fixed income rely on: those on AISH, those receiving employment income supports benefits.

As my colleague had mentioned, there are social workers on this side of the House and on the other side of the House who have worked closely with families who have a very, very limited income, Madam Chair, and when we're talking about proposing a one-month extension, that seems totally reasonable. We know that the government is going to push this through – we've seen it time and time again – regardless of the impact on the people of this province. I think that asking for a minimal extension, to December 31, 2019, is something that is absolutely reasonable and should be supported by every member in this House. We know it's going to go through, so proposing this extension, I think, is quite fair. We talked about Christmas and that happening in the month of December and just the general holidays. Many families that don't celebrate Christmas celebrate the holiday season: they're spending time with family, they're going to social events. Having an increase in energy and having a decrease in their income might mean that they're not able to do some of those activities.

10:00

I heard people talking about Christmas gifts. I know many families that I've worked with over the years, Madam Chair, that

can't afford Christmas gifts. The government doesn't seem to be understanding that there are families out there that are struggling. They access services that are available in this province, to which so many Albertans that can give do, charities like Santas Anonymous, where families will put forward their children's age and their gender and ask for a gift because they can't afford it. It's humiliating to have to say, "I need this help," and we're forcing families, more and more of them, into this situation, families that can't afford a Christmas dinner, that are relying on the food bank. I'm not sure if members opposite have worked with families or have had to go to a food bank themselves, but it's not something that people are super excited to talk about.

When families are coming to my office and they're in tears about the impacts of this budget, it's something that I take very, very seriously, and it's something that I believe as legislators we all need to take seriously. I can't imagine looking at a family and saying: "You know, we're sorry, but everything is just going up. The cost of living in general is going up. We're not going to provide you any sort of indexing for your AISH or for your employment and income support benefits. If you're a teenager who is a mom who is raising a family and you're still in school, at your job you're no longer being paid minimum wage." These are just some of the things that this government has done and inflicted on families all across the province, and they're afraid, Madam Chair.

I think that offering a simple one-month extension is not too much to ask. We've offered many opportunities for the government to listen to Albertans and to hear their struggles and to hear their fears and to hear the actual, real-life impacts that these decisions are having. Knowing that there are families that have two incomes that are struggling to be able to pay for daycare – they can't afford daycare. They might not be able to afford two vehicles anymore. They might have to give up one vehicle because they can't afford the increase to the insurance and they can't afford the increase to register their vehicle again.

This is a province that has so much to offer. I mean, when we were in government, we reduced child poverty. Things like this in this omnibus bill I don't feel are working anywhere near reducing child poverty. It's looking at increasing poverty across this province. And raising rates for energy, I think, is one more step that hits every single Albertan in the province. It's a way that their rates are going to increase. Asking for a one-month extension, I think, is totally reasonable. We're saying: please just allow one more month to give them some time.

Like I mentioned, I'm encouraging constituents, when they're struggling with financial means and just trying to understand how they can budget – they might have had a job loss; they might be looking at an increase of their benefits. Financial literacy is something that a lot of people haven't learned. It wasn't something that was taught in school, and some families weren't able to pass that on, and they just continue to struggle month to month, paycheque to paycheque, literally deciding between paying a power bill or getting groceries. And when you have a child who is telling you that they are hungry, I can tell you what that parent is going to choose. They're going to choose to feed their child. It might not even be something as exciting as a Christmas gift that they're giving up.

These are real-life impacts that are happening right now across the province, and people are really worried about what tomorrow brings for them. Even the fear of hearing about all of these cuts in jobs: it's terrifying. People don't know if they're going to have a job tomorrow. People are afraid of the possibility of not having work.

Then when you look at options about them returning to the workforce, they might have to go back to school, postsecondary, to

diversify, to look at something else because their job is no longer an option. And when we're looking at increasing student loan rates by 1 per cent and getting rid of the cap on tuitions, these are decisions that are going to prevent people from going on to better their education to better provide for their families. It's not just young people that are accessing postsecondary; it's adults that are forced into a workforce that they're no longer eligible for.

When we talk about this small change, Madam Chair, I think it's one hundred per cent reasonable to ask for the extension to December 31 as opposed to November 30, 2019. Let's give families one more month to maybe look at their budget and to adjust some of their spending and prepare for the incoming energy increases that they're going to see on their monthly bills. It's something that's scary. When we think about why we're in this position right now, it's because the government gave a \$4.7 billion giveaway at the cost of increasing so much to Albertans, and it's just not fair. I think we owe Albertans some stability, at least through Christmas. I know this budget is very unsettling and causing serious strain in families and conversations around kitchen tables, water coolers, and if we can give one month to allow for an extension, I think that's something that's absolutely reasonable. I would hope that every member in this House can go back and say: yeah, I supported this.

We know it's going to go through, Madam Chair. We've seen it time and time again despite the government hearing heartbreaking stories from Albertans, that our side of the House has shared so openly. We have people flooding our offices with phone calls, with e-mails, reaching out on social media, coming into our offices, coming here to the Legislature to be heard, to plead with the government to not make these drastic cuts that they're making. It's falling on deaf ears, and I think a simple proposal that isn't going to stop it – we know that that's not going to happen – but extend it to December 31, like the hon. member is proposing, is something that we should all be able to at least vote on. We're asking people to pay more in a time when everything is going up, when costs are going up, and that's something that's not being taken into account.

You know, the minister had mentioned that it's only \$7. Well, that, to me, says that they're just out of tune with what some families are actually dealing with. It's not just \$7. It's impacts to child care, to their transportation. All of these things, Madam Chair, are impacting families. It's a huge impact. Knowing that we have an opportunity today to vote on a simple extension, one month – that's all we're asking, one month – to allow families to perhaps sit down and look at their budget, that's already so strained from so many expenses going up: I think that is something that's reasonable. Asking for a little bit of stability through the holidays is completely reasonable. Giving them a little bit more time to look at this, especially during Financial Literacy Month, putting it on families to help them come up with a better budget that can absorb some of these damaging decisions that the government is making I don't think is unreasonable.

When we look at the overall impact of this, it might not seem that significant to have just one month, but to many, many families across this province it's going to make a huge difference, especially when we're looking at the retroactive charge and the increased costs over December that many families deal with. They're rebudgeting for January for tuitions. They're looking at many things that are increasing, personal income tax. All of these things families are already talking about, and giving them 31 extra days, I think, could be a great benefit.

10:10

I just know that there are so many families that I've worked with over the years that truly struggle, and knowing the impacts on them,

knowing the single mom who is struggling, who's working now for less than minimum wage, going to high school, raising her child on her own, knowing the impact of this is heartbreaking. I was in that situation myself, Madam Chair, as a young mom going to school, working, trying to raise a child, and trying to budget and balance. It's hard. And then seeing that the cost of child care is going up: it's just really heartbreaking.

I know that this is a simple amendment that should be able to be supported by all members of the House. It's only 31 days. I think it's something that's reasonable, and it would show good measure on the side of government to support this.

With that, I'd like to conclude my comments. Thank you.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, it's my pleasure to rise and also speak in support of this amendment to Bill 21. Continuing to have a regulated rate cap on until the end of this year, I think, makes a lot of sense. It is distressing because, of course, taking this off means that the consumers are vulnerable to price spikes. You know, people who are on fixed income: it makes it very difficult for them. Certainly, this bill also talks a lot about not indexing AISH or the Alberta seniors' benefit, for example, so these are other things that are sort of like a double whammy when you're not supporting people to have their cost-of-living increase.

It certainly strikes me as odd, Madam Chair, that the members of the government currently, while they were in opposition, spoke very highly of indexing. You know, I did some research and looked back in *Hansard* about how important – when we brought forward, in the fall of 2018, Bill 26, it was the indexing of AISH and the seniors' benefit, and many, many, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle spoke very positively on that.

Actually, here's a quote from the Member for Taber-Warner. He says:

People with disabilities are those people who we need to help. The AISH program is specifically designed in order to be able to help them . . . I actually am very grateful for a lot of the work that the current NDP government has done for that part of our society, something that I think is very important to Albertans and to the people who need it.

So he spoke very positively in that regard.

This is from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

This indexing to CPI will greatly benefit all support recipients who have been waiting for years for an adjusted amount that reflects today's cost-of-living increases. We've heard, devastatingly, from AISH advocates that some cannot even afford basic necessities. This is absolutely unacceptable. The supports are in place in order to ensure that this is never the case for anyone. The fact that this is still happening is unacceptable and must be addressed. Every Albertan, as a base, should be confident in their ability to afford personal hygiene products and other necessities.

Here are two members from the current government that, while they were in opposition, spoke very passionately, very positively, congratulated our government at that time. We had indexed AISH and, of course, the Alberta seniors' benefit. But it seems like something has shifted. All of a sudden there's a new view, and I'm concerned that regular Albertans, vulnerable Albertans aren't being supported.

So I just really would ask the members to look at, you know, the quite significant difference from what they professed not very long ago and what they're saying now. I would identify that there's a clear incongruence, and I wonder why that is. I'd be happy to listen to any member sort of try to explain that because it does seem to

lack integrity, what was shared then and what's being shared now. Certainly, that's a very important quality in a provincial politician.

With that, Madam Chair, I will sit down.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, shall I call the question?

Mrs. Savage: Madam Chair, I move that on the amendment, yes, we call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We are now back on the main bill in Committee of the Whole. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Mrs. Savage: Madam Chair, I now move that we rise and report progress on Bill 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, November 19, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:17 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 19 Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 2305

Second Reading

Bill 23 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019 2310

Committee of the Whole

Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019..... 2312

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875