



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, November 19, 2019

Day 43

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 19, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

### Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Prior to beginning, the chair will outline the process for this evening. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required when these reports are presented according to Standing Order 59.01(10).

The committee will then proceed to the vote on the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly. The vote on the main estimates will then take place.

Finally, the chair would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3), which provides that “after the first division is called... [in] Committee of Supply, the interval between division bells... shall be reduced to one minute” for any subsequent divisions.

### Committee Reports

**The Chair:** I would now invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future to present the committee’s report.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2019-20 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Advanced Education; Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women; Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism; Ministry of Executive Council, Ministry of Infrastructure; and Ministry of Labour and Immigration.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I would now call on the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee’s report.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Madam Chair, as deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2019-20 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Children’s Services, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, Ministry of Seniors and Housing, Ministry of Service Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

And now the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee

has reviewed the 2019-20 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Environment and Parks, Ministry of Indigenous Relations, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Transportation, and Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

### Vote on Main Estimates 2019-20

**The Chair:** We shall now proceed to the vote on the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that these estimates be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters relating to the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

Agreed to:

Offices of the Legislative Assembly	\$159,915,000
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**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

We shall now proceed to the final vote on the main estimates on all matters relating to the 2019-20 government estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

I would now invite the hon. Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2019-20 government estimates for the general revenue fund.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2019-20 government estimates for the general revenue fund.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2019-2020 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2019-2020 government estimates for the general revenue fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, have been approved.

Offices of the Legislative Assembly.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$67,343,000; office of the Auditor General, \$27,834,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$4,291,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$33,229,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$945,000; office of the

Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$7,578,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$15,525,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,149,000; office of the Election Commissioner, \$2,021,000.

Government main estimates.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,873,436,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$688,800,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$1,145,431,000; capital investment, \$15,326,000; financial transactions, \$1,310,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$1,417,598,000; capital investment, \$84,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$3,946,626,000; capital investment, \$683,000.

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: expense, \$271,546,000; capital investment, \$2,331,000; financial transactions, \$1,554,000.

Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: expense, \$298,367,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Education: expense, \$4,916,835,000; capital investment, \$751,000; financial transactions, \$15,678,000.

Energy: expense, \$1,761,001,000; capital investment, \$874,000; financial transactions, \$98,899,000.

7:40

Environment and Parks: expense, \$651,209,000; capital investment, \$72,110,000; financial transactions, \$4,019,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$19,619,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Health: expense, \$20,982,469,000; capital investment, \$22,230,000; financial transactions, \$67,819,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$198,357,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$14,157,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$484,358,000; capital investment, \$1,327,268,000; financial transactions, \$36,777,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$1,367,512,000; capital investment, \$9,198,000.

Labour and Immigration: expense, \$220,860,000; capital investment, \$1,150,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,482,557,000; capital investment, \$4,104,000; financial transactions, \$48,887,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$455,426,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$19,700,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$611,233,000; capital investment, \$104,720,000; financial transactions, \$10,150,000.

Transportation: expense, \$1,128,536,000; capital investment, \$1,013,507,000; financial transactions, \$99,939,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$240,095,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$1,362,000; contingency and disaster and emergency assistance, \$680,000,000.

Madam Speaker, that concludes my report.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well done, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

[The voice vote indicated that the committee report was concurred in]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:43 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer                      Loewen                      Savage

Allard	Long	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schulz
Copping	Milliken	Schweitzer
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Shandro
Glubish	Nicolaides	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Hunter	Pon	van Dijken
Jones	Reid	Wilson
LaGrange	Rosin	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Dach	Gray	Sabir
Dang	Nielsen	Shepherd
Deol	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley		

Totals:                      For – 36                      Against – 10

[The committee report was concurred in]

8:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would now like to alert hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(7) following the Committee of Supply's report on the main estimates, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of the appropriation bill.

## Introduction of Bills

### Bill 24

#### Appropriation Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 24, Appropriation Act, 2019. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a first time]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 22

#### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to speak to the last of the three pieces of budget implementation legislation, Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. This bill deals primarily with Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions. As I did with the other budget implementation bills, I begin with changes in my own ministry, Treasury Board and Finance. Bill 22 proposes a number of changes that will enable the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, better known as AIMCo, to deliver even better results on behalf of all Albertans. AIMCo currently manages an investment portfolio of approximately \$110 billion. This is public money. It includes Alberta government funds and endowments as well as most of Alberta's public-sector pension plans.

First, the legislation would require the Alberta teachers' retirement fund, or ATRF, to use AIMCo as its investment manager. The ATRF currently holds approximately \$17 billion in assets that are managed and administered directly by the ATRF

board. I want to emphasize that investing these assets with AIMCo will not impact teachers' pension benefits, and it will not affect the ATRF board's control of the plan. The ATRF board of trustees would still set investment policy and guidelines while AIMCo would be responsible for day-to-day investment decisions within the parameters set by the board.

Second, Bill 22 will require the Workers' Compensation Board, or WCB, and Alberta Health Services, AHS, to use AIMCo to manage their long-term investments. AIMCo would manage approximately \$10.7 billion on behalf of the WCB. These funds would continue to be used exclusively for injured workers, and there will be no changes to workers' compensation benefits because of this bill. For AHS, AIMCo would manage approximately \$2.3 billion of investments. Again, this change is only about the management of investments in the fund. AHS will still have full discretion of how they use their invested funds, and health outcomes would not be impacted because of this proposed change.

Finally, Bill 22 would also remove the option in the Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act for various pension plans to use fund managers other than AIMCo. This applies to Alberta pension services; the local authorities pension plan, also known as LAPP; the public service pension plan, known as PSPP; and the special forces pension plan, known as SFPP. These funds are already managed by AIMCo, and altogether these changes would add around \$30 billion to AIMCo's investment portfolio.

A larger pool of investments would allow AIMCo to realize greater economies of scale, increasing the returns and lowering administrative costs on a range of public investments. Ultimately, consolidating pensions, funds, and endowments under AIMCo's management reflects our commitment to make government more efficient.

Bill 22 also proposes changes to the LAPP, PSPP, and SFPP to ensure that these pension plans follow industry best practices. These changes include requiring board appointments based on competency as well as representation and reinstates the Auditor General as the auditor for these pension plans.

Next, the bill will amend the ATB Financial Act to include a statement of ATB's financial mandate. As a provincially owned institution ATB needs to deliver the best possible value on behalf of taxpayers. Through Bill 22 ATB Financial would be mandated to manage its business in a commercial and cost-effective manner, turning risk adjusted rates of return that are similar or better than returns of comparable financial institutions in both the short term and long term and to avoid undue risk of loss by prudently managing its business, which includes establishing and implementing relevant plans, policies, standards, and procedures. These changes would improve ATB Financial's strategic alignment with the government's fiscal priorities.

Lastly, for Treasury Board and Finance we would dissolve the Alberta Capital Finance Authority. This group was responsible for granting and administering loans to local authorities. With its dissolution these responsibilities would be transferred directly to the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, which will continue to provide low-cost loans to local authorities. The function of the Alberta Capital Finance Authority will continue uninterrupted, but we would achieve savings and reduce financial risks by bringing this program directly into government.

Next, I will discuss changes in the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General that return powers to the Chief Electoral Officer as they existed prior to the previous government's 2018 changes. This does not eliminate the Election Commissioner role but simply consolidates functions under the overall authority of the nonpartisan Chief Electoral Officer. The reunion of these two roles in a single independent office will bring Alberta back in line with

the model used in Alberta until 2018 and used in every other province. This reconsolidation of the office of the Election Commissioner into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer is an administrative measure intended to eliminate redundancy and streamline the function and the operation and implementation of Alberta's election legislation.

Moving on to Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Bill 22 would dissolve two boards and one fund. First, the Alberta Sport Connection and its board would be dissolved. Programs offered by the Alberta Sport Connection would be incorporated into services offered by the ministry. Moving the Alberta Sport Connection programs into the ministry would better leverage existing government resources, thereby cutting costs and reducing red tape. Government's previous funding commitments to the 2020 Alberta Winter Games in Airdrie, the 2020 Alberta Summer Games in Lethbridge, and the 2022 Arctic Winter Games in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo would remain unchanged.

Next, we would dissolve the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation along with the historic resources fund. No programs will be affected as we would move the services and funding into the ministry. Owners of designated historic resources would still be able to apply for heritage grants through the same channels. This change would save an estimated \$200,000 annually.

One change we would make in Health is streamlining how the mental health review panel operates. Bill 22 proposes changing the panel size from four to three. It would also allow reviews to be conducted by video conference. Alberta is one of the only Canadian jurisdictions that requires four members for a panel hearing. The three-person panel will still have a registered psychiatrist to ensure the best possible medical advice. These changes would improve services for patients by streamlining the process and reducing unnecessary administration.

Moving on to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Bill 22 would dissolve the Alberta Competitiveness Council and repeal the Alberta Competitiveness Act. The council has been inactive since 2011 and does not have a CEO or any employees. The proposed change is in line with government's review of public agencies to reduce waste, duplication, and nonessential spending.

Next, we are proposing two ways for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism boards to run more efficiently. Bill 22 would remove the requirement for a minimum of eight members on the Northern Alberta Development Council and reduce the maximum number of members from 10 to seven. Second, we would bring the same change to Travel Alberta's board: eliminate the minimum requirement of seven board members and reduce the overall maximum membership. A smaller board is more cost-effective and can be run more efficiently.

#### 8:10

As part of this bill we will also be dissolving the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, which has been inactive for more than three years and has no current membership. Through strict licensing and service standards our government already ensures that facilities serving vulnerable Albertans offer high-quality care. By dissolving this inactive committee, we are reducing duplication so that we can continue to focus resources on the front-line services Albertans rely on.

Lastly, we would dissolve the Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee. This committee was established by the Post-secondary Learning Act to provide advice to the minister respecting issues related to Campus Alberta. However, it's been inactive for nearly four years and does not have any appointed members. The Minister of Advanced Education continues to convene regular meetings with postsecondary board chairs.

Madam Speaker, those are the changes being proposed in the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. I appreciate the House's time and attention to all of these complex pieces of legislation. Our fiscal situation is challenging, but we've identified immediate changes that can help get us back on track. We're doing this all transparently and with respect for Alberta's taxpayers.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 22.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to speak against Bill 22. Certainly, we have seen this NDP opposition take a very principled stand against this bill that proposes an unlawful action, an act of self-dealing, and ultimately, the obstruction of justice through firing the Election Commissioner.

Now, we have already heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition, and we have heard from many of our caucus members that we oppose Bill 22. We do so because our leader has set the example. She has the distinction of being the longest serving member of this House. She is the longest serving member of this House because she has never given up, because she will always lead her caucus to stand up to the powerful, because she expects her caucus to rise to the same level of integrity that she has set for us, because she believes that Alberta can be better than this, which is an affront to the rule of law. She believes that we are better than this. She has led her caucus to oppose this bill because Grant Notley raised her to, and I only hope to raise my own children with the bravery and honesty that Grant Notley raised his own kids.

The NDP opposition opposes this bill because the foundation of a democracy is the rule of law and that the law applies to everyone and that laws get made out of the consent of the governed via the outcome of free and fair elections.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's first act when she was elected as head of Executive Council was to begin the restoration of democracy after 44 years ended in rot and entitlement. Her first bill was to begin to clean that up. Why did we do that? Because of the 2015 election campaign. The prelude to it was shady nomination races. The prelude to it was the firing of an Election Commissioner, the elections officer, the very one that this government is now going back to those PC days to fire. We had partisan returning officers in our past. That's what you got when you lost a nomination race; you got to run the election.

It was always clear that we had to do more to clean up elections, particularly after this very same elections officer, an officer of the Legislature, was fired by the PC government. Why? He issued a report on illegal campaign contributions. Alberta Justice didn't prosecute a single one. He found nine cases. He made 100 recommendations, including – get this – regulating leadership contests. For this he was fired by the Conservatives, and he had to go to court to get his severance. The same guy, as it turns out.

So we knew that there were Conservatives who wanted to flout the laws. There was a long history of this in Alberta, and that is why – that is why – the officer running an election was split from the person receiving complaints and following up on those complaints so that we could uphold the rule of law and ensure free and fair elections in this province. Since that time the Election Commissioner has entertained over 800 complaints. This has been a busy man. He is not twiddling his thumbs over there as an officer of the Legislature: 800 complaints.

Why do we care? Well, we care because he has before him an active investigation. Let's talk about what that active investigation entails. On July 19, 2017, a fellow named Jeff Callaway met with the Premier of this province and his campaign manager to discuss the leadership race. Weissenberger admitted the meeting happened. Then Mr. Callaway collects \$60,000 in unexplained donations that were wired into an RBC bank account and then furnished to other people to make unlawful contributions. It is an offence to furnish money to someone else to make donations, yet this happened, and it happened with the knowledge of at least the Premier's director of issues management. We know this because the courts have told us this through documents.

When does the Election Commissioner first come onto our radar? Well, it's on January 27, 2019. He confirms that the office is looking into the UCP leadership race, and here's his first utterance to the media. He is concerned about obstructions to the investigation where someone has attempted to, quote, dissuade co-operation with investigators and hinder the proper disposition of matters. I wonder who that could be.

Then Cam Davies is issued a \$15,000 fine. Karen Brown is issued a \$3,500 fine. Darcy McAllister is fined \$8,000. Lenore Eaton has been told that she may serve up to two years in jail. Happy Mann is fined \$9,000. Then, after all these fines, what happens? Jeff Callaway files a lawsuit against the Election Commissioner, trying to obstruct his work – we have a long history of this – seeking an injunction to halt the investigation into his campaign. Now, who would do that? Who indeed? The current principal adviser to the Health minister, Ivan Bernardo, tells the media that he is in fact the person who is acting for the clients to stop the Election Commissioner's work from moving on. Bernardo suggests that the Election Commissioner should pause the investigation. Well, we're doing more than a pause now, so I guess Bernardo got his way.

Then Jeff Park is fined \$7,000. Amy Davies is fined \$3,000. Lenore Eaton is fined \$7,600. Christopher Maitland is fined \$4,500. Christopher Scaee is fined \$1,750. Randy Kerr is fined \$10,000. Darren Thompson is fined \$5,250. Jennifer Thompson is fined \$3,900. Jeff Callaway is fined another \$70,000. Well, it's a good thing Bernardo got a job with the Health minister because he sure wasn't a very good lawyer. On July 30 the Court of Queen's Bench rules that the Election Commissioner was the successful party on the application and is entitled to an award of costs. So it's good that he got a nice, juicy appointment with Executive Council after his work because he sure didn't shine as a lawyer on this file. Now they've applied to the Court of Queen's Bench for a judicial review. Of course, they've lost Bernardo, but they'd better call Saul because now they've got Jonathan Denis on the file. That is fantastic.

Well, why do we care? We know that the Premier orchestrated this unlawful campaign. We know that there have been consequences levied by this Election Commissioner. We know that people close to the Premier have already attempted to obstruct this investigation.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has called a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against a Member**

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West just accused the Premier of conducting an illegal campaign, accused the Premier of Alberta of doing illegal actions. The facts are that in no way is that



true. The hon. member cannot accuse a sitting member of this Legislature of conducting illegal acts. It's not factual, and it certainly is going to cause disorder in the House. It is accusing an hon. member of this place of something that is just not true.

8:20

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that in context of what was being said, I understand this to have been a reference to allegations which have been made, fines which have been levied in multiple instances. Certainly, those allegations were made about a leadership race in which the Premier was a contestant. I understand the hon. member to have been speaking directly about those things. In many cases those fines have been levied, so I would say that those allegations have been in some instances proven. Certainly, in some instances there's evidence. I would say, overall, that this is a matter of debate, but I would respect it if you were to caution us to indicate that that was an alleged action as opposed to . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm prepared to rule. I can't imagine that you would provide any context that would be of assistance to me, but it is, of course, your right to provide additional comments.

I agree with the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View that caution is necessary, particularly around what is going to be a very sensitive evening, just my speculation, when making allegations about what members of the House have or have not done. Certainly, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West referred to a number of reports that are factual. I also would agree with the Government House Leader that there have been no fines levied, so as such making an allegation about what the Premier has or hasn't done will require some delicacy. I encourage the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West to be cautious with the words that she uses around making allegations about any member of this Assembly.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I ought to have said "alleged." Much to *Hansard's* dismay, I speak too fast, and I spoke too fast over my notes. So thank you.

Back to the point, we know that people close to the Premier have already attempted to stop this investigation. We know that they're appealing the fines, and there are tens of thousands of dollars at stake. We know, in fact, that there is \$211,000 at stake. There are a number of people who haven't paid their fines yet. So what happens when these investigations are dropped? Their friends don't have to pay their fines anymore.

We also know that there are a number of members of this government that are implicated in these investigations. We know that the MLA for Calgary-East has been interviewed, the MLA for Calgary-Elbow and Minister of Justice has been interviewed, and the MLA for Calgary-Edgemont and Minister of Infrastructure has been interviewed. The MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore and Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, the MLA for Calgary-Beddington and Minister of Seniors and Housing, the MLA for Calgary-Foothills and Associate Minister of Mental Health Addictions, the MLA for Cardston-Siksika, and the MLA for Sherwood Park have all been interviewed in this investigation that they are now seeking to undermine by firing the Election Commissioner.

Mostly, what we know about this is that it is clear that this government is willing to take the hit on firing the Election Commissioner – the public opinion hit, the bad headlines; the reviews are in, and people are not happy – because clearly the

alternative is much worse. We don't know yet what that is, but it has to be.

Now, I hope that the members across the way take a moment of pause. Not all of the members are caught up in this web, yet they will have to go home and answer questions as to whether they, too, are brazen. They are associated with a strongman; they are turfing the watchdog; they are politically interfering in the work of the Election Commissioner: those are just the last 24 hours of headlines, Mr. Speaker. They will have to answer questions from their own constituents.

They will get wrapped up in this even if they had nothing to do with it. Was it worth it? Is it worth it? Perhaps just speak up at the next emergency caucus meeting on Bill 22. Perhaps just speak out and say: no; let's press pause on firing the Election Commissioner because it is an affront to the rule of law. Caucus members would be heroes with the people if they did it. We'll see if anyone has the courage to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the public, certainly, and our own constituents will learn how much the NDP caucus cares about democracy in the coming days. They'll learn about how much we care about the rule of law and the integrity of elections. We will use every tool available to us to stop this. This is an odious attempt to undermine lawful election processes. This is an affront to who we are as Canadians. This posits that if you want to skirt the rules on leadership campaigns, you can absolutely do so because we'll just fire the guy that is investigating you after the fact.

Now, here's one of the reasons why we care so much about this. Here's the difference between folks who will just do politics because they have some sort of venal streak in them of a win at all cost sort of mentality. Here's the difference. Here's why we care so much about the integrity of elections and the rule of law in elections. Every vote matters. We all know that when we're out campaigning. Why does every vote matter? Because every person matters. Every person matters. On this side of the House it doesn't matter who you are; you will follow the law. On this side of the House it doesn't matter who you are; your X means the same thing in that secret ballot box. It doesn't matter who you are; you should not be able to buy yourself an election or favours or freedom from consequences, which is what we see with this bill. We will defend that principle of equality, the rule of law, and an election that reflects the will of the people, where no one is above due process. That is the approach of this NDP caucus to Bill 22, Mr. Speaker.

Now, it's very clear to me that some of the commentators who have indicated that the UCP believes it is immune to political fallout are hitting a nerve there. They do in fact believe they are immune to it. They do in fact believe they get a free pass because they won an election. Well, that's not how it works. No one is above the law. No one gets to skirt election rules. No one gets to break those rules, make illegal contributions, or derive a benefit, a tax benefit even, from making donations of funds that were given to them.

Now, Bill 22 is about much more than this. You know, the Finance minister earlier tried to make it sound really boring because there were a whole bunch of other things in it, just sort of skimming over the fact that it is a direct attack on the rule of law and an ongoing investigation and an open door to destruction of evidence, to stopping all of these thousands of dollars' worth of fines, to simply stonewalling anyone from getting to the truth. I think that Albertans are not having it. Albertans are very keen watchers of governments that treat them with arrogance and entitlement, and they can change their minds quite quickly, in my experience, when they see the footprints of arrogance and entitlement and hubris.

You know, the Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks is laughing because he's arrogant, I guess. I don't know. I don't know why he's laughing, if he thinks it's fun.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order has been called by the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false motives. You know, throwing shots at the Government House Leader, Sundre's favourite son, is just inappropriate in this Chamber. It's causing disorder. I recognize that this is a bit of a heated discussion tonight. That's maybe a bit of an understatement. I would encourage the Member for Lethbridge-West to maybe retract her remarks and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, keeping in mind that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West did say that the hon. Government House Leader is arrogant.

8:30

**Ms Ganley:** I think what she said was: "He's arrogant, [perhaps] . . . I don't know why he's laughing." I mean, it has a certain amount of subtext to it. I think that perhaps we can all move on from this one, knowing that the hon. member will not do it again.

**The Speaker:** I think that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West will recognize that the Speaker is providing a significant swath here this evening given that when we say that a member is arrogant, even if we provide a qualifier, it's quite likely unparliamentary. But we'll provide an additional caution to her, keeping in mind that this is now the second in less than 20 minutes. I hope that she will revise her definition of what caution is.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Well, I was talking about, Mr. Speaker, Albertans' limited patience with arrogance, entitlement, and hubris. I'd like to read into the record some observations around this matter from a piece posted earlier this evening in *Maclean's* magazine.

It harkens back to the dismissive shrug with which United Conservatives greeted the scandalous revelations that came out about them during the provincial campaign . . . "Voters don't care about that stuff," Conservatives told me repeatedly last spring.

In a budget omnibus bill, United Conservatives will fold the election commissioner's office into Elections Alberta, effectively terminating [him] when the bill passes. This . . . does create uncertainty around the future of Callaway's court challenge . . . [The Premier's] allies say the investigations can all proceed . . .

. . . It's also true that if Donald Trump had the chutzpah to fire special prosecutor Robert Mueller, his probe would have . . . continued under somebody else's guidance.

But would it have had the same weight?

Yes, jobs are still scarce, Trans Mountain pipeline construction is in its still-uncertain infancy . . . But if Albertans give [the Premier] a pass on this strongman maneuver, they've signalled that he can get away with pretty much anything.

A strongman manoeuvre. I wouldn't want in a democracy to be part of a party that was led by what was referred to as a strongman manoeuvre. That's really not what anybody got elected for, and I know many of the members in this House deplore a strongman in other parts of the world. We were at the Holodomor memorial today. We have deplored some of the actions that we have seen in Hong Kong. We have deplored, certainly, the invasion by a strongman. We have deplored the invasion of Turkey into northern

Syria and what has happened to the Kurds: strongman manoeuvres. I don't think that anyone wants to be associated with that kind of language, yet those are the reviews for Bill 22. Strongman: there's a real connotation to that word that I don't believe we want to be part of.

Now, the Election Commissioner himself was rather surprised at this development. He learned of his dismissal, his firing, by way of the media yesterday. You know, it wasn't a tweet, like people get fired south of the border, but it was close. He was "concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process." Well, that is not a ringing endorsement. That is not, Mr. Speaker, any kind of corroboration for the claim – the claim – for which the government has provided no evidence, that this is something that will simply reduce redundancy. This, in fact, doesn't show any of that good faith, when he learned of it in the media. He also details how many complaints he got and how needed his role is.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we deplore this bill. We deplore its attacks on pensions and other initiatives as well, but I think that what Albertans are about to see is the fact that the NDP caucus will stand up for their democracy, for principles, for integrity in the face of anyone or any action like this that seeks to undermine it and undermine the rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre; however, I have a list rolling, so we'll go back to the government side, and then we'll return to the opposition side.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is not yet available, so as such, the hon. the Government House Leader, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for an opportunity to rise in regard to Bill 22. Several parts of Bill 22 are worth discussing this evening. I'm sure several of my colleagues will rise in short order to discuss several important components of Bill 22 and why it's an important piece of legislation and why it deserves the support of all members of this Chamber as it works through the Chamber. I only rise today to respond primarily to some of the misrepresentation of facts that continue to be presented by the opposition, from the NDP, in regard to this important piece of legislation.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West just went through a rather lengthy tirade of not very factual statements, Mr. Speaker. She stated – and I want to unpack some of this for the members of the Chamber – that investigations would stop, stated that investigations somehow would not go forward, and the hon. member knows full well that that is not the case. The hon. member knows full well that investigations will remain and take place through the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner office, which will work with the Chief Electoral Officer and continue with any investigations that take place, in fact, moving the investigative process even further away from a political body because currently the Election Commissioner reports to this Chamber through the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

The Election Commissioner will now report to the CEO of Elections Alberta and will continue any investigations – that's a fact – as they have for over 100 years in this province, until the NDP moved forward with their changes to change our system, different than any other system in the entire country under their mandate, Mr. Speaker, at which time, certainly, the legacy members of the current government caucus who were in opposition fought against because they thought that it was the wrong process for our province. In fact,

the Government House Leader of the day, Brian Mason, our former colleague – and I hope he's enjoying his time in his vineyard in Kelowna in the Okanagan there tonight – had to move time allocation and closure to be able to get that through because the opposition of the day certainly was very, very clear that they disagreed with breaking the election system into two in our province.

The person who provided some of that advice, interestingly enough, some of the information that we determined that it made no sense to break apart the management of our election system and the policing of our election system, was actually the current Election Commissioner, who, in a white paper that he provided to the Northwest Territories government, I believe in 2016, Mr. Speaker – I referred to it in question period today – made it clear within that white paper that separating the election system into two separate organizations and not having it run as one was probably ineffective, certainly not cost-effective, and took the organization in two different directions where it wasn't working together. This bill simply does this.

8:40

The second thing that the hon. member said seemed to be implying that fines that were already issued by the Election Commissioner would somehow not have to be paid or would go away. That, Mr. Speaker, I want to again reiterate, is not factual. Again, the NDP has trouble with facts occasionally – I do know that – but in this case they're definitely not being factual. Fines have been issued. The Election Commissioner's office remains in place, will continue to do its work, just now in partnership and back with the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta, which, again, has been there for a hundred years.

The fake outrage from the NDP is certainly ridiculous. I did enjoy a little bit of time to have the opportunity to be able to call back home to a few people over the supper break and spend a little bit of time explaining to them what was taking place in the Legislature today, and I can tell you that the majority of people that you talk to in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre are just tired of the NDP's fake outrage. They were tired of it in the last election, which is why in my constituency they got something like 7 or 8 per cent of the vote and the United Conservative Party was about 82 per cent. I recognize that west-central Alberta is not the traditional heartland for the NDP, to be fair. I don't know if the NDP has ever broken 10 per cent in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's not a place they spend a lot of time campaigning.

But I can tell you that on coffee row in Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, and Rimbey they're just shaking their heads about the NDP continuing their tactics of fear and smear, continuing to come into the Chamber and say that the Election Commissioner office won't exist when it will, continuing to say that investigations won't take place when they will, continuing to say that there'll be political interference in investigations, Mr. Speaker, when we know that the system will still remain under the care of an independent officer of the Legislature who reports to this Chamber, an independent officer, by the way, who was last appointed when the NDP was in power in this place. In my experience as a member of this Chamber, Mr. Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta, has always acted in a nonpartisan way and has done an excellent job in his capacity as the Chief Electoral Officer. I am not aware of any concerns from the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices or from this Chamber in regard to his performance and any reason why we should in any way question his credibility or his ability to be able to make sure that investigations go forward.

The last comments that I would like to talk about are in regard to some of the unfortunate comments that Member for Lethbridge-

West made in regard to the hon. the Premier of Alberta, indicating that he is under investigation by Elections Alberta. At no time have I seen anything that indicates that the Premier of Alberta is under investigation from Elections Alberta. I do certainly acknowledge that Mr. Callaway's campaign appears to have been under a lengthy investigation by Elections Alberta. Again, if any member of this Chamber, including the Premier, is under investigation by Elections Alberta, those investigations will be protected within the legislation that the hon. the Finance minister has brought forward to this place.

But to stand up inside this place and indicate that an individual of this House is under investigation when they don't know that is appalling, Mr. Speaker, and not becoming of any member of this Chamber. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West then went on to name individual cabinet ministers, including the Minister of Justice and others – I didn't write them all down as she was saying them – and then indicated that because they had responded to interviews, being requested to – in those interviews they were told that they were not under investigation, clearly told that they were not under investigation and were happy to be able to provide any information that they may have been able to provide. I was not in those interviews, obviously, but I do know that those members were told that they were not under investigation. But then they have to come to this Chamber, where they represent their constituents, and hear from the Member for Lethbridge-West accusing them of being under investigation even after they had been told that they were not under investigation: again, very unbecoming of a member of this Chamber and very disappointing.

But it goes to the credibility of the NDP when they continue to misrepresent facts to Albertans each and every day, stating things like, "Investigations will not be protected" or "The Election Commissioner office will not exist" or "This will now be run by political offices, not by independent officers." Mr. Speaker, Albertans lose faith each and every day in their Official Opposition, and one great example of that is this: as you look at the coverage – the Member for Lethbridge-West referred to coverage this evening – you see over and over the Official Opposition referring and stating, outright stating, that closure and time allocation has been moved on this legislation already and that there will only be three hours of debate on this legislation, which is not factual.

In fact, I happen to know that unless the NDP intends to allow us to have the vote on this sometime before midnight tonight, I can tell you as the Government House Leader that I intend to keep us debating on Bill 22 well into the wee hours of the night to give the Official Opposition as much time as they can on the second reading of this legislation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that by the end of this evening, we will have already well surpassed the amount of time of debate that the NDP are trying to tell Albertans that they get on this legislation, again misrepresenting facts to Albertans. That's why the NDP has no credibility left, because they just immediately go to fear and smear, won't stick with facts, spend their time focused on ridiculous allegations, and it's disappointing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West spent a lot of time accusing people on this side of the aisle of horrific things that, in fact, are not true and then went on to sit on a very high horse and say that the Official Opposition and the NDP in this Chamber are perfect and they don't do anything wrong and that this is just the most appalling thing ever. I've already established why it's not, but that is very rich coming from a member who sits in a caucus whose own leader has confirmed that there were two investigations into sexual misconduct of her caucus in which something was found, and that leader has refused to even declare whether those current members actually sit in those benches today. That's confirmed by their leader.

Now, I won't do the same thing that the Member for Lethbridge-West did, stand up and start naming people based on rumours that I've seen on the Internet on those people because that would be inappropriate for a member of this place, so I won't do that. But for them to stand up here and have the nerve to say something like that when the Member for Lethbridge-West knows that she is sitting in the benches, possibly – she may even know who they are; I don't know – with two people that her leader has confirmed – confirmed – were involved in serious sexual misconduct, confirmed by an internal investigation by the NDP. That hon. member should maybe have a talk with her leader and her caucus about whether that's appropriate.

As the debate goes on tonight, I do hope that we talk about other aspects of Bill 22. It's an important piece of legislation, and ample opportunity will be given to debate it, but we should stick to the facts. We should not be misrepresenting facts and confusing Albertans. Let me be very, very clear that the Election Commissioner office remains, reports are protected, investigations will continue. The Chief Electoral Officer will remain an independent legislative officer of this place, answering through the same processes, through the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and upwards to this Chamber, not to the Premier, not to cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that's not how it works despite the NDP wanting to accuse the Premier of that. Those are the facts. No matter how loud the NDP lies . . .

**Mr. Shepherd:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize.

No matter how loud the NDP misrepresents facts to Albertans when it comes to this legislation, they can't make what they're saying, in fact, actually be factual, Mr. Speaker, because it's not, just like when they continue to go to this Chamber and say that there are only three hours of debate on a bill when there's going to be significantly more than three hours of debate on a bill. It's just not something that the majority of Albertans are buying anymore.

It's got nothing to do with arrogance, what happened in the last election. You know the communities that we come from. They wouldn't accept people acting in arrogant ways. In fact, that's why they rejected what they thought the NDP government was being, significantly arrogant. It's got to do with facts. The Election Commissioner is protected; investigations are protected: those are the facts. There is no political interference with this.

I predict, of course, that the NDP are not going to be able to get focused on any other portion of this important piece of legislation. Ultimately, the decision will be made by the 87 members of this Legislature, and then we'll move on to the next piece of legislation. The NDP will continue their tactics of fear and smear. Look, I've made no secret: I think that's why they're on their way not only to not be the Official Opposition and not government but, next, to be the third party and, I predict, at some point not to even have a seat in this Chamber, because of the fear and smear tactics that they've chosen to do. That's why Albertans rejected it.

I know that the members that were re-elected for the NDP inside this Chamber – I congratulate them for that – haven't taken the time to reflect on why all their colleagues lost their jobs. It's because of this fear and smear tactics, the ridiculousness of this NDP opposition. I do encourage them to stop misrepresenting facts to Albertans.

8:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we call the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the member.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate rising following the hon. House leader in his own rather lengthy tirade, that was certainly rife with a broad range of misrepresentations of facts and certainly had a large lack of factual statements, as he himself attributed to the Member for Lethbridge-West. Amongst them, I would note his laughable claim that the firing of the Election Commissioner in the process of moving that position under the Chief Electoral Officer, in fact, is a good thing because it removes him further from political influence. The hon. House leader indeed made the claim that the Election Commissioner currently reports to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

Having served as the chair of that committee, indeed I know and yourself, Mr. Speaker, being well informed, as obviously the Government House Leader is not, about the actual operations of officers of the Legislature, that they do not report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, none of them, including the Election Commissioner. They are appointed by this House. They respond and are responsible to this House and can only be removed or appointed by this House. If that is what the Government House Leader considers to be political interference, then every single officer of the Legislature, from the Auditor General to the Ethics Commissioner, all the way down the chain, suffers from a similar amount of political interference. So let's be clear. What this government is choosing to do with this bill is not improving the independence of any officer of this Legislature. They're removing a significant level of independence from the position of the Election Commissioner.

Now, the hon. House leader also made the claim that the Member for Lethbridge-West said that current members – and she named several here, indeed, some who are serving as ministers – were under investigation. That is, in fact, not the case. I invite him to take a look perhaps at the Blues or *Hansard* when that is released, and he can see that she clearly indicated that they merely had been interviewed as part of ongoing investigations both by the Election Commissioner and the RCMP into members of the governing party, investigations which have been duly noted in multiple media reports. As yet, I have not seen the lawsuits of defamation, so I am assuming that those reported facts indeed stand as facts as reflected by the Member for Lethbridge-West, which are far from what the Government House Leader suggested as being rumours on the Internet. It's what is known, Mr. Speaker, as journalism, though I appreciate that perhaps, given some sources of media which seem to be popular amongst some members of government at times, they may not quite understand.

That said, I appreciate the opportunity tonight to speak to Bill 22. You know, Mr. Speaker, every day during question period and at times during debate I have the perhaps somewhat dubious honour of listening to some members of government offer their opinions of myself and my colleagues and our questions that we bring to this House on behalf of Albertans. I have the fortune, I suppose, of sitting quite close to several of them. Indeed, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka tends to be particularly colourful. But indeed it's not an unfamiliar thing here during the day for me to be told by these members that we are terrible people, that we are, in fact, socialists. Just for the record I have never actually even read a book by Karl Marx. I'm not a man of political philosophy or having studied political science. It seems that, indeed, at times members of the government seem to think that we've done some incredibly terrible things, suggestions that we would allow a community such as Fort McMurray to burn. Apparently, they have the belief that we

would somehow intentionally attempt to destroy an entire industry or economy.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that their opinion of our Election Commissioner, Mr. Lorne Gibson – well, as this came up for discussion today and as it was raised during question period, indeed these members to my right were pretty clear about their opinion of Mr. Gibson as they laughed at the concerns that we raised here in this House. Indeed, we've had discussions of arrogance and entitlement. The word “smug” comes to mind. That is what I've been seeing from members of this government in discussing what is a profound change.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker: I have not seen a single member of the media, individuals who have been observing politics in this province for, in some cases, decades, who have a deep knowledge of the history and the actions of governments in this place – not a single one of them dismissed this as something laughable. Indeed, aside from those who are directly affiliated with the government party, with the UCP, their direct partisan friends and allies, every single political commentator I've seen is calling out the arrogance, the entitlement, the utter disregard for democratic convention that this government is demonstrating in this action to fire the very Election Commissioner who is currently investigating multiple participants in their leadership race, spiralling ever closer towards the Premier himself.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have yet to run into a single Albertan that finds this a laughing matter, that considers this a small thing. I'll tell you that I've been beginning to receive a number of e-mails already. The nights that I've been out, last night when I was out in the community, indeed, people that I've run into today: this is being raised, this is being discussed across the country. This is on national news. This is what this government wants to represent for us here in our province.

Indeed, what I heard today from these members here to my right is that, in their view, Mr. Gibson is a partisan appointee, Mr. Gibson, who has never held a political membership, to the best of my knowledge, in his life, a man who has been absolutely scrupulous in all of his work, to the point that the Government House Leader feels that he will try to defend this policy by quoting a white paper from Mr. Gibson as an expert on electoral politics and indeed, particularly, electoral financing. Yet it is the allegations of members of this House that Mr. Gibson is compromised, that in his work investigating illegal campaign donations within the very sphere of influence of the Premier himself, involving a kamikaze campaign, which the Premier has denied on multiple occasions but, again, which we have seen reputable journalists and media in this province repeatedly bringing forth evidence of – there, Mr. Speaker, are your misrepresentations of facts, the denials that we continue to hear from these government members.

I suppose that this level of partisanship, of mockery, of telling themselves what terrible, misguided, awful people myself and my colleagues must be: perhaps that's what it takes to be able to screw up the courage to assuage your conscience to vote for something as reprehensible as this section of this bill.

Indeed, members of this government today tried to tell me that this bill did not in fact fire the Election Commissioner. Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. Right here in Bill 22, section 13(11)(5):

Any employment contract between the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section, held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act is terminated on the coming into force of this section.

That means he's fired. He is fired upon this bill coming into force.

9:00

Now, the fact that he may, if the Chief Electoral Officer should choose, be rehired does not negate the fact that the government is passing a bill to fire the individual who is currently investigating a kamikaze campaign, thousands of dollars of illegal campaign donations, whose information, that he found in the course of his investigations, has gone on to spark RCMP investigations into potential electoral fraud, Mr. Speaker, involving complex voting schemes, potentially fraudulent e-mails, again reaching into the very circles in and around the Premier himself.

Mr. Speaker, it is not my job to afford this government and these members any benefit of the doubt. That is not why I'm here, and that is not what I am asked to do on behalf of my constituents. Indeed, they are making it quite clear that that is not what they are wanting me to do on this bill. And I dare say that if these members actually sat down and had the conversation with the constituents in their own constituencies according to the actual facts, their constituents would not be big fans either. Yet these members are choosing to laugh and to mock in their attempt to screw up the courage to vote for a bill that, frankly, insults and tramples on the trust that their constituents have placed on them to act with integrity and uphold rather than undermine the very democratic institutions that gave them their seat in this House. There is no denying that there is a preponderance of evidence that indicates there was, at the very least, some incredibly shady trickery involved in the very race by which the Premier became the leader of his party and went on to gain the premiership. But, apparently, his members are okay with that. That's how politics gets played.

Mr. Speaker, I ran because I wanted to see politics done better in this province, because I was tired of the arrogance and entitlement I had seen from previous governments. Indeed, there are members of this current government that were part of those governments and saw this the first time around yet somehow are willing to sit here and do it all again. As the Leader of the Official Opposition said today on national television, this goes to the very heart of Canada's Constitution, the separation of the judiciary, the executive, and the legislative lines, which these members seem repeatedly content to blur.

The Member for Lethbridge-West gave a lengthy explanation of the many questionable actions in which members of this governing party have been involved, which come close to and touch on so many people intimately involved with this party, indeed, at this time with this government and with members that are sitting here in this House, that have led to a total of more than \$211,000 worth of fines that have been levied.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is not my job to give this government any benefit of the doubt, and I can assure you that every one of these members would not do that if the shoe were on the other foot. They would not for a moment hesitate to call this kind of an action out. Indeed, we see how far they are willing to go with their conspiracy theories around environmental organizations attacking the province and taking on other things in their misrepresentation, as we continue to see as we discuss this bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of questions for the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, but just before I get started, the implication that Mr. Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer, is not capable of doing his job or having a significant role in being able to carry out any investigations is quite despicable. In recalling this discussion previously, when I had the

privilege of being in opposition, the arguments around this were quite heated at that time as well, and I can remember consistently having the discussion.

Actually, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre was the chair at that time and did a really good job of actually mitigating a lot of the very, very great debate that went on around the necessity for having a commissioner at that time. It was very interesting to see the disrespect that was intended and implied towards the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Resler, that he was incapable of doing the job that was set out for him, which, by definition, within the definition of what the commissioner does, he already does. The whole discussion around this was around a redundant job, a redundant position already held by an extremely competent human being who, within his capacity over the years of doing this, had already shown his ability to do so and who in the future, with the legislation that could pass possibly here in the next little while, will continue to do the work that has already been set out, including the investigations that are already under way.

So I go through this. You know, there were so many things, and I'll get a chance, I'm sure, to talk about this a little bit more. When the contract was negotiated, Mr. Speaker, the opposition was talking about time allocation, and this has been a big part of their discussion. Did you know that the time allocation that was put on this discussion of the motion was one hour? One hour. That was the discussion that we were allowed to have around a duplication of a role, that was obviously a duplication, and also questioning the competency of the Chief Electoral Officer, who already had this position and was extremely, extremely good at his job.

My question for the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is: maybe you could tell me what the job of the Chief Electoral Officer is and why you feel that Mr. Resler is not capable of doing the job that he was sent out to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to answer that question. I would answer it by pointing out that upon the creation of the office of the Election Commissioner, he immediately began receiving a large number of submissions. Indeed, he has spoken many times about the capacity that he has had to have. Now, he has managed very well within the resources he had, but he received a large number of submissions, concerns, complaints, requests for investigation, all of which he has acquitted quite well.

At no point have I suggested that Mr. Resler was not doing his job. I think Mr. Resler was working within the capacity and the resources that he had. With the changes that our government brought in, many of which had been recommended by Mr. Gibson and for which he was fired by a previous Conservative government for daring to even suggest – strengthening oversight of, in particular, I would note, leadership campaigns – there was a great increase in what the expectation was of what would need to be done. So our government decided and determined that having a dedicated officer of the Legislature to uphold and enforce those rules could be of benefit to the people of Alberta, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, it has been.

Now, this government may not like the fact that the majority of wrongdoing and issues that he has found are attached to themselves and their friends and their party – they may choose to view that as partisanship – but I would say, Mr. Speaker, that it is simply Mr. Gibson doing his job, much as Mr. Resler continues to do his, which is running and operating elections in the province of Alberta.

9:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on the bill. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika would like to join in the debate.

**Mr. Schow:** I sure would, Mr. Speaker, and I am grateful that you recognized me to speak on this bill. It's an honour to stand up in this Chamber tonight to talk on Bill 22, a really important piece of legislation that I think is really going to achieve one of the ultimate goals of this government, which is to make things leaner, to be more efficient, to be more effective, which is what over a million Albertans asked us to do.

We do have bosses back in our own constituencies, and those bosses have made things very clear to us as we went through the campaigns. It's interesting, as we listen to some of the debate tonight, that I feel like I was almost hearing – I wouldn't say almost. I was hearing a campaign-style speech from the Member for Lethbridge-West, almost invoking an inner Churchill, if you will. Such passion. But what I think she fails to understand is that campaigns aren't won in this Chamber. Campaigns are won out on the doors. Having worked countless campaigns, I'd be happy to consult with the Member for Lethbridge-West on how to run one, because, you know, as someone who has been involved with one at a number of levels, I can certainly share some advice on how to do that.

Like I said, the first one is really, actually consulting your base, consulting those who would actually want to be involved in your campaign, and maybe getting a bit of a team together – a campaign manager and some volunteers – even feeding them some food, which would be a nice option there. But one of the things you don't want to do is go and insult your campaign volunteers or insult those who may actually want to come join your campaign, like the member has done this evening in criticizing our government and the direction we're going and those who voted for us and supported our side. If that member is looking to win a leadership race and draw some supporters from this side onto her side, she might want to actually show a little more respect to those citizens.

Now, I also found it interesting that in talking about this bill, a measure to make Alberta more lean, more effective, that member decided to invoke references to Syria, Hong Kong, and the Holodomor – we commemorated today the 11th anniversary of the act – which was, of course, Stalin's genocide of over 10 million Ukrainians. That kind of reference is completely unacceptable. And if the shoe was on the other foot, I believe that that member would be standing up in outrage over that kind of a comment. To suggest that Bill 22 is even comparable to the atrocity of the Holodomor: Mr. Speaker, I would venture that that's several steps too far.

I also find that when the members opposite are talking about Bill 22, they're only talking about one small portion of a very significant piece of legislation. I mean, if you look at this thing, this is pretty dense stuff. There are about 13 pages that talk about the Election Commissioner whereas the rest actually deals with the overall mandate given to us by Albertans with overwhelming numbers. That's like being the family member at Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner who goes in the fruit salad and just picks out the strawberries. I mean, really, nobody likes that person because, you know, you're just taking one part of the salad. Take the whole thing. Let's have a robust conversation about this bill, not just about the one piece.

I recall when I was living overseas in Russia. When I left, I packed everything, including the kitchen sink. You can imagine that in going away for two years, you think you're going to need all these shirts and pants and belts and shoes and socks and everything else that you think is so essential at the time, and then you get over

there – and for anybody who's gone backpacking over in Europe, you'll know that you can't take everything. I learned that lesson really quickly because I lived in several different cities. I lived in St. Petersburg, right in the centre of the city, I lived in Veliky Novgorod, I lived in Pushkin, and I lived in Peterhof, in some beautiful places in Russia, where I was doing service work, serving the Russian people and cleaning up hospitals and teaching English classes. But through moving from place to place to place, every time I left an apartment, I would leave a number of things behind because I realized it just wasn't necessary. It wasn't going to fit in my suitcase, and I didn't need it to accomplish the goal that I was there to do, which was to serve the people.

Similar to this bill, we have to be lean and look at the things that were outlined by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board. I think these are good things that we're doing. You know, we look at AIMCo. It currently manages about \$110 billion, and we've taken a measure to move the ATRF into AIMCo, \$17 billion into AIMCo. Now, there have been a lot of misconceptions about this move, but the reality is that this has no impact on teachers' pensions. This has no impact on the ATRF board control of the funds as the board will still set the investment strategy. It's simple.

So I don't know where this backlash is except for what the NDP might be telling the media, and that is flat out just spin, just misinformation, and I guess that's their job. You know, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has said that he'd be doing no favours nor pulling any punches, and I can respect that. That is Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition's role in this Chamber, to hold the government to account, and I truly respect that. I've said that lots of times before. I do respect that role but understand that it's important, Mr. Speaker, to have the facts straight.

Same thing with WCB and AHS, moving long-term investments into AIMCo. From WCB it's \$10.7 billion and also \$2.3 billion from AHS, and both will maintain discretion over the funds. That will not change. You know, these changes alone add about \$30 billion to AIMCo. Now, what does that mean? That means savings because of economies of scale. That means savings because of reduced inefficiencies. So I don't see how that is really a bad thing.

For anybody looking within their own pocketbook or their own chequebook in their home, if things are a bit tight, you start tightening the belt, you start making some difficult decisions. If I've got a \$100-a-month grocery bill – and I wish it cost \$100 a month to feed me – and somebody came to me and said, "You know what? You can only spend \$97 this month," I'd put back the chocolate bar. You know, I'd put back both chocolate bars, maybe all three of them. But the reality is that we have to make these kinds of decisions and recognize what is essential versus what is not essential.

Furthermore, there are a number of provisions in this bill – a number of provisions in this bill – that will help accomplish this goal. We've moved the Alberta Sport Connection program into the ministry. We've dissolved the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, also the historical resources fund. The mental health review panel has gone from four members to three members. Why there's four members I'm not quite sure. As I understand it, as earlier stated, these boards typically have three members in other jurisdictions, so why do we have four? I'm not sure, but this is a good move towards being efficient. We've dissolved the Alberta Competitiveness Council, repealed the Alberta Competitiveness Act.

To reduce waste and duplication and nonessential spending is the goal of this bill, and I don't understand why all we're hearing tonight is one part of a much larger piece of important legislation to accomplish a goal that over a million Albertans voted for, over a

million Albertans asked us to do. This is us responding to our employers, Mr. Speaker.

Now to address the issue – I wouldn't call it the elephant in the room because we've already talked about it a lot, but I'll address it myself – of the changes of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General to return powers of the Chief Electoral Officer as they existed prior to the government's changes in 2018. Now, I was a staffer here in 2017. I don't remember all the dealings that happened in 2018, but my understanding is that this does not eliminate the Election Commissioner's role but simply consolidates the functions under one single authority, the nonpartisan Chief Electoral Officer. To suggest that that gentleman, Mr. Glen Resler, is incapable of doing this job would be nothing short of offensive, so I don't imagine that the members opposite are suggesting quite that. You know, moving these two roles into a single independent office will bring it back in line with the way Alberta was in 2018. The consolidation of the office of the Election Commissioner into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer will eliminate redundancies and streamline processes and operations. Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise that this is a move that our government is making.

9:20

If you look at this bill again, even more pieces that are part of this bill: you have the Northern Alberta Development Council – the minimum members are now seven instead of 10 – dissolve the Social Care Facilities Review Committee; dissolve the Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee.

Mr. Speaker, this is one part of a much larger bill, yet we're focusing on that. I suspect that deep into this night we're going to continue to talk, at least members on the opposite side are going to talk specifically about 13 pages in a much larger bill. I just would love to hear some thoughts about some other parts of this bill instead of cherry-picking the strawberries out of this fruit salad. Rather, let's hear about the rest of it, hear their thoughts.

Instead – I'm going to continue – probably, through the rest of this evening, as we debate this longer: more campaign-style speeches like the Member for Lethbridge-West gave us. Now, I do appreciate her moxie. I know that I knocked on doors during the campaign in her constituency to help out the person from our party who ran against her. There were members of her constituency who spoke quite highly of her and her work ethic, and that's great. You know, I understand that. But if that member is going to run for a much larger role, to try to run the party, which would ultimately be an attempt to run the province as potential Premier, she might want to recognize that there is a world outside of Lethbridge-West. And to appeal to those average, everyday, extremely normal Albertans, she might want to recognize that they think about more than just one part; they think about the whole piece. What's the future of this province going to look like if we end up with no ability to fund anything because of the fiscal disaster of the province, that we were put in by her government?

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take up a whole lot more time, but I do really want to emphasize the importance of Bill 22 and what it does for Alberta. We are an efficient people. We are a hard-working people. I am, as I've said so many times before, the proud grandson and great-grandson of ancestors who came here, certainly not for the weather but for the opportunity of a better life, something that they could leave for me, that I could leave for my kids. Now is the time where we still have the opportunity to change the way we do things, change the way that we operate, change the way we look at problems, because we are still in a position to make those changes.

As we were travelling at a rapid pace towards a fiscal cliff, someone had to hit the brakes, and that's what Alberta did on April 16. Albertans finally said: we've had enough; we recognize that we voted for change in 2015. Albertans did not want the PC government, and they did not want a Wildrose government. They chose the NDP, and that was the will of the people. I will never disrespect the will of the people. But in April of this year those same voters made a conscientious decision to hit the brakes and decide what was best for this province, and it was not the direction that the NDP was going.

So I will be supporting this bill. I will be voting for this bill, and I will continue to consult my constituents on this bill. What I've heard so far is gratitude that this government is actually doing what it said it would do. It's not going ahead and making any kind of crazy changes or implementing significant new tax hikes on them that were not campaigned on during the election. Our campaign was clear that we would reduce the size of government, that we would be mindful of spending, and that we would be supportive of Albertans and the things that they need, and we're doing just that. [interjections] The way we were doing things before, Mr. Speaker, was not working. Albertans clearly said that.

While I appreciate Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and the heckling that they decide to engage in now and during question period, at some point in time they have to recognize that Albertans are going to be tired of them crying wolf. They're going to be tired of it, and they're going to become tone deaf to it, if they haven't already, because – I'll tell you what – in my constituency of Cardston-Siksika all of this that they're talking about, all the hyperbolic phrases are falling on deaf ears.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a brief question or comment to make.

**Ms Ganley:** A brief question or comment: well, I definitely do have several comments, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing that I'd like to pick out from the speaker before me was that he asked repeatedly: why are we hearing about just this one part of the bill? Well, we're hearing about just this one part of the bill because that's the part of the bill that impacts the rule of law in our province, so I think that that's a pretty significant concern. You know, the member certainly referenced his ancestors coming here to this country for several opportunities. Well, a lot of people come here to this country for opportunities, and those opportunities are preserved. One of those opportunities that people come here for is the rule of law in this country, the idea that, fundamentally, everyone will be subject to the same laws, that there will be no arbitrary laws, that laws will not be made to support the random whim or will or flight of fancy of whoever happens to be in government. That's a fundamental reason that people come here. So the reason we're talking about this portion of the bill is because the rule of law is important.

In Mr. Gibson's letter that he wrote to the media earlier, he wrote: I'm concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real or perceived integrity of the election process. Mr. Speaker, the reason that we're focusing on this section of the bill is because this is the section of the bill that undermines the public's confidence in democracy, that undermines the public's confidence in our electoral system. We are standing in the Legislature of this province. We are standing in the Legislative Assembly, and I think that in no place in the country, perhaps excluding the Parliament of Canada, would it be more important to preserve the impact of democracy. I think there should

be no group of people who are more concerned about the public's perception of our laws and of our democracy and of its health. I think my comments about that are that the reason we're so concerned about this one portion of the bill is because it's the part that strikes to the very essence of who we are as a people and how we choose to govern ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, there are, in fact, other areas of this bill that I could go on about at length, and were they in a different bill, I would do that. I think that using the length of this bill, using that it has crammed together unrelated things, removing an officer who is actively investigating the political party of which the government members are members with removing people's rights to govern their own pensions – I mean, those are some wildly disparate things. This is some, like, serious omnibus legislating. Implying, because you've rolled these unrelated things into one bill in an attempt to move them through the House quickly, in an attempt to avoid any public scrutiny on them, that by picking one thing out of such omnibus legislation, we are somehow doing wrong to the public: I mean, it's almost mind-boggling. It's shocking to suggest that, oh, well, all the government has to do is take a really ugly piece, something they really badly want to hide, and bury it deep inside other unrelated legislation, and then the opposition ought not to talk about it. I mean, it was a good attempt, but it didn't work.

I don't think it's very reasonable to stand in this place and suggest that because they have rolled unrelated things together in an attempt to pass them quickly through this House, that ought to cause us not to be concerned about the rule of law and about how we fundamentally govern ourselves as a people. This concept of the rule of law has been around for a long time, the idea that it's the rule of law versus the rule of force, so people cannot by greater strength or greater numbers overcome the law. [The time limit for questions and comments expired] It seems I've run out of time.

9:30

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

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak against this Bill 22. I think that's the only logical thing that comes to my mind, that in good conscience I can only oppose this bill. As my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View was talking about, in reference to the Member for Cardston-Siksika, why we are talking about just one part of the bill, let me talk a little bit about that.

This bill amends 31 pieces of legislation. Thirty-one pieces of legislation. You will remember, as part of the 29th Legislature, many occasions. One that comes to mind is that Labour Relations Code changes and workers' compensation changes were put together by our government, and the then opposition, the UCP, was lighting their hair on fire that this was omnibus legislation. They brought all kinds of motions, they used all kinds of rules to split that legislation so that they could debate those things thoroughly. I think that if they truly believed in that kind of debate, they wouldn't bring forward a piece of legislation that amends 31 pieces of legislation.

It's not reasonably possible to address all 31 in the time that I have, so I will have to prioritize what I choose to speak on. Certainly, changes to the Election Act are of utmost importance to me and to my constituents because we were all elected in a democratic process, and having strong democratic institutions is important and vital for a strong democracy. Both the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commissioner were playing very important roles, one for election management and the other one in enforcing the laws and conducting the investigative role, investigations. Both of these roles are important, and nowhere in my comments would I



ever suggest that one role is less important than the other. I have utmost respect for both of these offices.

There was considerable talk about facts, so I will state some facts. Then I will have a little bit more discussion about it. One thing: it's a fact that the Election Commissioner's office and the Election Commissioner will no longer exist if we pass this piece of legislation, Bill 22. That's very clear in section 13 of this legislation. We can all agree that based on this piece of legislation, if passed, which will be passed, I think, the Election Commissioner's office or the Election Commissioner, Lorne Gibson, will no longer exist there.

The second thing. I think that it's a fact that prior to this piece of legislation passing, the Election Commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislature. He is not reporting to the Chief Electoral Officer. Instead, he is an independent officer of the Legislature. His annual report says that in the first nine months he had 450 complaints, and to date there are 800 complaints that were made to the Election Commissioner, so certainly people have concerns about how these election laws are enforced. Albertans have raised concerns, and they deserve to be heard. Those alleged violations need to be investigated.

Another thing that is a fact is that the UCP leadership campaign from 2017, in which our Premier was victorious, is under investigation by this same office. I think that is also a fact. It's also a fact that certain members of the UCP caucus, including from the front bench, have been reached out to, have been talked to – and I'm not saying that they are involved in it – by the RCMP, by law enforcement, in relation to this investigation. Those members include the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Infrastructure, the minister of culture and status of women, the associate minister of mental health, and the Member for Calgary-East. These are the facts that we know so far. Again, I'm not alleging that they are involved in it, but these are facts, that they have been reached out to by law enforcement in relation to the UCP leadership campaign from 2017.

Also, it's a fact that \$211,723 have been levied as fines on 16 people or corporations. That's a fact that is publicly available. We know even the names of the people who have been fined.

I think I will note another thing, that somewhere I was reading that consolidating these two offices will save the government \$1 million over five years. But to the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance, just a suggestion: had we not changed the Election Commissioner, he would have given you \$1 million in five years at this rate anyways because in one year he fined \$211,000, times five. Over \$1 million you would have collected, so you didn't save much there.

Then it is also a fact that this Bill 22 says that the Election Commissioner's office may continue, but it doesn't say that there will be an Election Commissioner. The fact is that this bill doesn't indicate whether the current commissioner will be rehired or whether any commissioner will be hired. It doesn't say whether any of those active investigations will continue when this commissioner's office is dissolved. These are the facts.

I think we value here our institutions, we value here the rule of law, and when we know that there is an active investigation that may potentially involve some members of the UCP caucus – may involve. In the midst of that investigation what this bill is doing is removing the very person who is investigating that file. It's taking away the independence from that very person who was investigating this scandal. It, in fact, completely gets rid of that person's office. On this side of the House and Albertans: they're rightfully concerned that it's an attack on our institutions, on our democracy.

9:40

The UCP talks about their mandate. I think Albertans gave them a mandate of jobs, economy, and pipelines. That was their key slogan. Nowhere in that most detailed platform of the UCP did they tell Albertans that they will remove the office of the Election Commissioner, the very office that is investigating the kamikaze campaign, which may involve some UCP members, that they will remove that. Albertans didn't give them a mandate to walk roughshod on laws and attack the rule of law and democracy in our province.

It's an important piece that is included in this Bill 22, and that's why we are focusing more on this change, because this will change many things. This will dilute respect for the rule of law. This will diminish the respect for our institutions. This will send a message that with power you can stop an investigation that may potentially include you. Albertans certainly deserve better than this. Those who elected me in Calgary-McCall certainly deserve better than this. Personally and many of those who are first-generation immigrants: we have seen, we have witnessed with our own eyes, in our own experience, when the rule of law is violated, what happens to society. We have seen those things when institutions are weaker, what happens to the society.

This change certainly weakens our institutions. It certainly puts the rule of law in question and, I think, the basic and fundamental values that we believe in as Albertans, as Canadians, that every individual is equal before and under the law. Here we have a caucus who is thinking they are not equal before and under the law, so they are changing the laws in the middle of an investigation that may potentially impact them. It's clearly wrong, and we will be opposing it here in the Legislature, in this House, and everywhere across this province because it's fundamental to our democracy, fundamental to our province.

There are many other things that I can touch on, and one of them is public-sector pensions. Arguments were given that it will remain the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is anyone wishing to add an additional question or comment? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member was just starting a thought, and I'm wondering if he could conclude it for the benefit of the House.

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

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I was getting to public-sector pensions. Responsibility is given to AIMCo, and Albertans are asked to trust this government that there will be no changes and that they will get the same benefits and everything and to have trust and confidence in AIMCo's ability to manage the funds; they're very experienced people.

The fundamental question here is, Minister, that it's not your money. This money belongs to those who contributed to this fund. That's the fundamental thing, and they have every right to manage their money where they see fit. It's not about AIMCo's ability or inability to manage their fund. It's not about whether their benefits will stay the same or not. It's about people's basic right of self-determination. They have financed and funded these pension plans, they have a vested interest in these plans, and they have every right in a democratic society to choose how to manage these funds. Without consulting them, without affording them an opportunity to have a say about their funds – I would have preferred it if you had

done a referendum on it for these fund holders and asked them whether they want you to move it to AIMCo or not. It's not about AIMCo's ability or inability to manage these funds; it's fundamentally about those people's basic right to self-determination, those people's basic right to manage their own funds the way they see fit. It's an attack on people's basic rights, and certainly that's unacceptable. Again, we will oppose that attack here in this Legislature and across this province.

Also, after seeing how this government has dealt with the Election Commissioner's office – I think, at the end of the day, that the minister retains the authority to direct AIMCo – I think people sure feel that their funds may not be safe in the hands of this government. If they can remove the Election Commissioner that is investigating them, how can they trust this government with their pensions? At the end of the day, for many that's their only source of income, and they cannot trust this government handling their pensions like this without any consultation whatsoever with them. They deserve an opportunity to understand these changes better. They deserve an opportunity to be heard.

9:50

There are almost 400,000 people that are part of these pension plans, pension funds, and I think that among those 400,000 people there are very capable people who can manage these funds. At the end of the day, it's their money, it's teachers' money, and they should have a say and a right in how their monies are invested. They need to be consulted before this takeover by this government of their funds.

Also, other things this government... [The time limit for questions and comments expired] Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on the main bill.

Unfortunately, I believe that you're the mover of the bill, unless you're planning on adjourning debate.

**Mr. Toews:** I thought it was 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Sorry; 29(2)(a) has expired. The time has elapsed.

We are moving back and forth from government to opposition, so we'll have the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that about two and a half hours ago my youngest daughter returned safely from a three-month trip to Europe. One of the joys of this modern age is that even though she was halfway around the world, we got to stay in constant touch with her through online chats and text messaging. Three months ago she left for Europe with a bank account that was full, and she sent us pictures of her upgraded seat on the airline. She sent us some lovely pictures of her wonderful meals in Paris, and she did send us a text that said: I can't afford me. Today she returned with less money in the bank. She flew economy. She still got home safe, but she realized that her circumstances were different than they were three months ago.

Albertans realized in April that our circumstances are different than they were four or five years ago. Our government was elected on a promise to live within our means, to find efficiencies, and to bring our province back to balance. This bill is an important part of actually getting that done. By eliminating redundant ABCs, this bill also reduces red tape for everything from social services seeking licences to easing access to receiving mental health and addictions treatment, making life better for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, every member on this side of the House spent hundreds of hours at the doors in our spring election campaign. It led to this government receiving the largest mandate of any

government in Alberta's history, with our party receiving over a million votes. This was key to our understanding of why we were sent here. At every door we heard the same stories of job insecurity and anxiety about the economy, of how our families have had to make significant changes to their lifestyle as a result of pay cuts at work, a partner being laid off, or the carbon tax hurting a family that was already living paycheque to paycheque. It is from this that we established our priorities: to bring back jobs, to get pipelines built, and to reignite our economy.

This demanded leadership from the very top rung of this government. To exemplify this approach, our caucus agreed to take a 5 per cent pay cut while the Premier himself reduced his pay by 10 per cent.

Our budget continued this approach by laying out a clear and credible path to balance. Hard decisions had to be made, and our budget as well as the report from the MacKinnon panel prove it. Where we can, we must always look to find efficiencies that can prevent us from having to make even more painful decisions. While much of this work is being done by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, it was also reflected in both our budget and a number of bills that have come out. Tonight this Bill 22 builds on that work by finding efficiencies in a number of additional areas, whether it be eliminating boards that already haven't functioned or existed for a number of years such as the Alberta Competitiveness Council, which has been inactive since 2013, or finding more efficient ways for boards to operate such as the suggested changes to the Northern Alberta Development Council and the Alberta Sport Connection. Our government is taking concrete action to live within our means and to return our province to balance.

That said, these necessary and pragmatic steps aren't what the media will focus on. This opposition's over-the-top theatrics regarding the steps we are taking to bring our province in line with other jurisdictions will of course steal the headlines. So if I can, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address some of the fear and smear that the NDP is trying to change the conversation with, both in the changes to the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and the changes to the chief electoral office.

I have seen a number of questions asked in this House already about the role of AIMCo and ATRF. I know I've personally gotten to learn a lot more about AIMCo and how they already manage a number of the public-sector pension plans. It's been encouraging to hear of AIMCo's success in managing these funds, Mr. Speaker. While, like almost everything we debate in the House, we're not likely to go home at the end of this debate in perfect agreement on what the best course forward is, the rhetoric from the other side of the House far overexaggerates the issues at play. AIMCo outperformed the ATRF from August 2017 to August 2018, with a return of 9.8 per cent compared to ATRF's 9.6 per cent. AIMCo has also outperformed the ATRF over the last four years.

That, however, while being a benefit, is not the best reason why I feel this move should be supported. The larger investment pool held by AIMCo will allow the ATRF to significantly reduce administration fees. These fees can be directed back into the fund, protecting both teachers and taxpayers.

In addition, I believe that it's important to note that the ATRF will be able to maintain the same strategic decisions that they have always had, with the board of the teachers' retirement fund retaining control of determining how the fund should be invested as well as retaining ownership of the plan's assets. The board will continue to develop policy for the fund while being able to leverage the substantial assets of AIMCo to do so.

The other area that the NDP has created fear over is the changes to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, Alberta didn't even have an Election Commissioner until

2018. The appointment of a separate officer as the Election Commissioner simply doesn't make sense. It was simply an extension of the NDP's reckless disregard for taxpayers' dollars. The Chief Electoral Officer has always been capable of ensuring that elections proceed fairly and according to the law, and they have done that for over a century. The accusations that have been levelled that this was done in order to end the investigations currently being pursued by the Election Commissioner: this is simply not the case. As officials from Elections Alberta as well as members of our government have confirmed, there will be no immediate impact on ongoing investigations, and the Chief Electoral Officer is free to continue to pursue them now that they are rightfully back in his file.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's unfair to say that the rhetoric in this House has hit some ridiculous levels this year, but for a bill that aims to implement a number of cost-saving measures, the rhetoric around this bill has hit a new fevered pitch. I look forward to voting for this bill and the pragmatic cost-saving solutions that it will bring to Alberta taxpayers.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to hear from this member. We don't often get an opportunity to hear from him in the House, so I appreciate that he took the opportunity to share what I hope were his thoughts on this bill.

Just to address a couple of things there. He spoke of rhetoric reaching a fevered pitch. Mr. Speaker, I would agree that many times we do hear a lot of rhetoric coming out in this House. Indeed, we often hear that from members of government as they put forward what are so joyfully known as puffball questions during question period. We certainly hear that from ministers of the Crown, ministers of the government, when they are purportedly answering questions in this House. We have a lot of give-and-take in this House, I think, in terms of what constitutes rhetoric. I would suggest to this member that when we are talking about, in this case, not just the simple act of moving the Election Commissioner's office, though certainly that is a profound decision, but taking away the independent office of an independent officer of the Legislature and making them subservient to another officer, that is, in and of itself, a fairly profound move. It's not the simple sort of housekeeping that this member seems to think.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, none of us have stood in this House and suggested that that is the issue with this bill. The issue that we have brought forward is around the very appearance if not outright existence of a rather serious conflict of interest in choosing to make that decision, much as we have discussed the appointment of their commissioner, Mr. Allan, for the war room.

10:00

This government and, I guess, this member as part of it does not seem to understand the principle that when holding a position with this kind of power and indeed when enacting legislation in this province, which is an incredible privilege, one should be utterly scrupulous in avoiding not only actual conflict of interest but even the appearance of the same, which is why, Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of us stealing headlines. Trust me; every journalist was breaking down the door to write this story long before we ever reached out to talk to them. Social media was full of their amazement at the audacity of this government to make this move.

I suppose my question, then, to the member is: does he appreciate that what he considers to be a simple piece of housekeeping has, indeed to a large number of Albertans and, I would dare say, even

an increasing number of people who voted for him and his government, at least the appearance if not the outright suggestion of craven self-dealing and clear conflict of interest, an attempt for government to pass legislation solely in its own favour?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod should he choose to respond.

**Mr. Reid:** I'd like to thank the hon. member from the other side. Tough decisions need to be made – we all agree – decisions that are better for the people of Alberta and the efficiency of this government, because it's not my money, and it's not your money. It is the money of Albertans. [interjection] Absolutely.

I ran on the premise that government is too large and that we need to run leaner because we simply cannot sustain our province at the levels that we were operating at over the past number of years. What we presented in our budget, what we present through this legislation, Mr. Speaker, are those opportunities to make decisions that will cause Alberta to be sustainable in the long run, to move through these difficult times, and to once again experience the province that enjoyed the prosperity that my great-grandparents moved to this country to take opportunity from, that I enjoy today as their descendant. As a businessman every day I needed to make decisions to cause my business to sustain the tough times to get to the success so that we and my staff could prosper. We need to do the same as government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 22. I would retract that. I don't think it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 22 because it's such a terrible bill. But we rise today and we speak on what is perhaps one of the most influential pieces of legislation that we will see in our time in this House, and it's influential in all of the wrong ways. It's influential because it is an attack on the core fundamentals of our democracy, it is an attack on the core fundamentals of independence and justice, and it's an attack on and an affront to this very House. It speaks to the high level of corruption that this government is complicit in. It speaks to the high level of corruption that they are willing to go to in firing the independent investigator that is currently investigating corruption, fraud, bribery.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Unparliamentary Language**

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, a very exciting 30-second start. To imply that the government is complicit in corruption would be unparliamentary. You have about 14 minutes left. We've seen how the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West was able to express points passionately but do so in a parliamentary manner. I would just provide some caution that you might heed some of her discretion as you debate. I'm very keen to have a full and robust debate on Bill 22. I have no position, as I mentioned earlier, on Bill 22, but I want members to be very cautious with the language that they use with respect to ensuring that we are respectful of the traditions of the Assembly.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take that under advisement.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, we have never seen an investigation like this in this province, an investigation into alleged corruption, bribery,

fraud, forgery by members of this government caucus, investigations that were being performed by an independent office, by an independent officer. Then we see in black and white in this bill that that contract has been terminated. Those are the words that were used by this government. They are the ones that are terminating the investigation of the person doing the actual work to determine whether corruption had occurred, to determine whether fraud had occurred, to determine whether criminal acts had occurred.

Those were the types of things that were being investigated, and now through the media – they did not even have the courtesy to give a call to the commissioner himself. They did not even have that professional courtesy, Mr. Speaker. They fired him through the media. That is absolutely shameful. That is something that no democratic institution in the Westminster system should ever see, and these government members should know better. They should know better than to be so shamefully brazen, as has been reported, as to try and do this type of action, to go after the person doing independent investigations without even consulting with that investigator. That is something that is absolutely shocking to me. It's something that's absolutely shocking because these members should know better. They should know better.

When the Justice minister, Mr. Speaker, was running in this very campaign that is now being investigated by the Election Commissioner – well, it was being investigated by the Election Commissioner – the Justice minister himself raised concerns that there were irregularities, raised concerns that there was voter fraud, raised concerns that they needed an investigation into this. And now that that investigation is moving forward, the Justice minister is supporting a bill, this Bill 22, that will absolutely terminate that investigation. If that's not hypocritical, I don't know what is. This hypocrisy is deafening.

We just saw a member across the way, a government backbencher, get up and speak passionately about how we need to reduce the size of government. Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, what they've done by this termination is that they've actually cost the government more money, because the over \$200,000 in fines that the government caucus members and their party have had to pay has actually exceeded the amount that it cost the government to run that office this year. Those fines, the types of allegations and corruption that we're seeing being fined, the types of bribery and fraud that we're seeing being fined would have sufficiently covered, actually, the costs, so I don't know what he's advocating for here. I think he's actually advocating to reduce the size of government where it harms his party. That is something that's absolutely shameful.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's something that's absolutely shocking, and Albertans will not stand for it. Albertans know they deserve better from their democracy. Albertans know they deserve better from their government, Madam Speaker. It's something that we can see right here plain as day, that this government either does not understand or they do not care about what this means for democracy. I think Albertans will be able to make that decision themselves.

I have a bit of a message to pass on. I know that there's quite a lot we're going to get through tonight, but I know that my former colleague and a former colleague of yourself as well, Madam Speaker, and of many members of this House, the former Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Brian Mason, was referred to earlier in debate today. I believe it was by the member who's the current environment minister. He actually wants the environment minister to know something. He wants the environment minister to know that he's not in British Columbia. Indeed, he's actually, just

like many Albertans, at home, and he's watching our debate tonight. He's watching our debate, and he wanted me to actually express that it's with great difficulty because he's having to spend so much time listening to government members and, in particular, the Government House Leader. I think that's something that's very concerning for him and concerning for many Albertans.

10:10

We look at the effects of this bill. I think that in the last Legislature that member had been one of the longest serving members of this entire Chamber. Indeed, he was the longest serving member of this entire Chamber in the 29th Legislature, and today the Leader of the Opposition is the longest serving member of the 30th Legislature. They will tell you and they have said in this House – at least, the leader has said it in this House – that this is a fundamental affront that has never been seen. This is an attack on the core of what we stand for, of why we are elected and why we are sent here. This is an attack on every single thing this institution stands for. This is an attack on how we do government, on how we do governance, and on what good governance looks like, Madam Speaker. It's an attack on the very foundation of what this building symbolizes, and that is what is so shocking and so scary.

It's scary, Madam Speaker, and I use that word because Albertans are worried. They're worried that there was interference in the independent judicial process here, the independent investigation, the independent investigation into forgery, fraud, bribery, corruption. Those are the things that people that are in the government caucus and people who are affiliated with the government party are being accused of. Those are the shocking things. When we see that these attacks are going on on the independent office, when we see that the independent officers are not even given the courtesy of a phone call, then it's something that's very, very, very concerning for Albertans.

Really, Madam Speaker, always you don't want to get caught in the cover-up. That's something that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has said to me as some advice he wants to pass on, and I think that's very prudent advice. It's very prudent advice because we're going to be seeing a lot coming out in the days and weeks and months to come. The things we are going to be seeing or that I hope we will be seeing – the investigator has now been fired, summarily terminated by this government, by the Finance minister's bill. We know that that is something that is very concerning.

We know that this government has a record, Madam Speaker. The facts of the matter are that this government has a record and a pattern of misusing taxpayer money. They've gone in and chartered private planes. They've gone in and given \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations. They've gone in and decided that it was appropriate to fly other Premiers and their wives around. Then, on the other hand, when investigations into impropriety are going on, they are now firing the very person that would be responsible for those investigations. That's the shocking thing, right? We can see this pattern moving forward. We can see this continuation of what Albertans are seeing over and over again.

That's concerning because when somebody says, "Well, I made a mistake, and we'll fix it," that's okay, right? This government had every single opportunity to say that time and time again, but instead we saw that the Justice minister refused over and over again to apologize. We saw the Premier refuse to apologize for misusing taxpayer money. We saw these government members refuse to apologize for being hypocritical regarding the investigation. We see this time and time again. What they're telling Albertans and what they're telling this House is that they have no respect for the fundamental foundation of our democracy, that they have no

respect for the fundamental foundations of what we stand for, of why we were elected here. The very institutions that we represent are being attacked by this bill.

I know one of the members across the way – I think it was the Member for Cardston-Siksika – said, “Well, I wish you’d talk about more things and wouldn’t pick individual pieces out of the fruit salad,” Madam Speaker, but you know what? This entire bill tries to do so much. Those members, this government, is trying to distract from the very fundamentals of the danger. They are trying to distract from what they are attacking. They are trying to distract from that they don’t respect this institution. They don’t respect the process of governance. That’s what’s really concerning to Albertans.

That’s why, Madam Speaker, you’ve seen all over the media, I’m sure – and Albertans are seeing it, too – in every single major outlet, even the conservative ones, that people are concerned. They’re saying that this government has no respect for the public, they’re saying that this government has no respect for the institutions, and they’re saying that this government is so brazen, the words that are being used, that they don’t think that public fallout even matters to them. That’s extremely concerning because it’s not about public fallout. We know that. It’s not about public fallout. It’s about respecting democracy. It’s about understanding that we have a parliamentary system here in Alberta. Instead, what we are seeing is the government firing the person responsible for investigating corruption, firing the person responsible for investigating members of their own party, Madam Speaker. That’s shocking because in what universe are you supposed to be your own judge, jury, and executioner? In no universe. That is foundational to our democracy here. It’s foundational to western liberal democracies to be able to have these separations of power, to be able to have this independence of our judiciary, to be able to have these ideals that nobody is above the law.

Instead, this government has reached in – reached in – and broken all of the traditions, broken all of the rules, broken all of the things that we are supposed to accept as traditional Westminster parliamentary systems and western liberal democracies, broken all of the conventions and decided that they can go in and fire their own prosecutor. That’s absolutely shocking. Albertans will not stand for this. Albertans know they deserve better from their government. They deserve a government that will not allow the prosecutor that is currently investigating their party to be fired like this, Madam Speaker.

We’ve heard, time and time again, how this bill is about reducing the size of government and all these other things that are great and how we should look at the administrative processes and all those things. Members of the government backbench got up and spoke about how we should look at the administrative processes that changed here because those nitty-gritty details are so important.

Well, Madam Speaker, what is most important in this bill is that all of those nitty-gritty details are actually just being thrown in an omnibus bill. They’re trying to make it so that it’s too hard to debate this bill. They’re trying to make it so that it’s too difficult to figure out what is important in this bill. There is lots that’s important in this bill; that’s true. But this government does not even have the respect for this institution – they don’t even have the respect for this institution – to introduce individual bills for each of those processes, right? They could have pulled out ATRF into an individual bill. They could have pulled out LAPP into an individual bill. In fact, most governments would, Madam Speaker.

But what we are seeing instead is an Americanization of our democracy, an intentional Americanization of how we do legislation in this House, an intentional attack on our fundamental democratic institution. They’re giving \$4.7 billion away on one hand, they’re chartering private planes, they’re doing all these

things, and then they bring in an omnibus-style bill just like in the States. That’s something that’s very shocking.

I think that they are trying to do some very dangerous things. They’re trying to do some very dangerous things in this House. They’re trying to do things that underpin and attack the foundations of why we are here. They attack the foundations of why we were elected. They attack the foundations of our entire process, Madam Speaker, and that’s very dangerous. It’s very dangerous that we can see this type of thing happening in front of us.

We can see history being written. We can see history being written when we have a bill that actually proposes to fire the prosecutor who is investigating corruption, bribery, fraud, and forgery, including from people who sit in this very House right now. People who have seats in this Chamber are currently being investigated, and many of them who are not being investigated have been interviewed. I believe it’s actually dozens of people on the government benches. When we hear that they are now firing that investigator, that is an attack on our justice. That is an attack on democracy. That is an attack on our Legislature, and that is something that is absolutely shameful. That is something that is absolutely disgraceful, and these government members should be ashamed. I hear them laughing and chuckling away, but they should be ashamed.

I know that some of them, if the shoe was on the other foot, if, let’s say, they were MPs in Ottawa – in fact, some of these members were MPs in Ottawa – if they had seen a federal government pull this off, would be lighting their hair perhaps even literally on fire, Madam Speaker. I wouldn’t dare to speak on what they may or may not do. That is something that we would see time and time again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

**Ms Phillips:** The member had begun some thoughts on the implications of firing the Election Commissioner and certainly has pointed to some evidence as to why this might be problematic with respect to due process, the rule of law, and the integrity of free and fair elections in a democracy. I’m wondering if he can continue to share those thoughts with us.

10:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for their comments there. I think it’s very important that when we look at this legislation and we look at what this legislation proposes to do and when we look at – in any western liberal democracy, what we see is that this legislation is an affront to those systems. I’ve said it before, but I think that this is really shocking. This is tinpot dictator stuff, right? This is actually crazy stuff, to go in and try to fire the person investigating yourself. No other system in the world would accept this as a reasonable way to do justice in your system. The integrity of the judiciary, the integrity of having independent investigations are fundamental.

You would expect this type of bill to be brought in in countries, Madam Speaker, that we would consider too dangerous to travel to. That’s where you would expect this type of bill to be brought in. Instead, we are seeing this bill brought in in Alberta, which is supposed to be a free and strong area, a free and strong province. Instead, we are seeing this bill brought in in what is supposed to be a western liberal democracy, what is supposed to be somewhere with free and fair democratic elections. That is one of the greatest jeopardies posed to our Legislature and likely will be for generations to come.

We are seeing history being written right now, and government backbenchers should realize that. They should realize that they are being a part of one of the most fundamental changes to what we do in this province and how we recognize the independence of investigations and the integrity of our democratic institutions. They are right now voting on a bill that will affect this province for generations to come. They are voting on whether we think it's okay to fire the person investigating corruption, fraud, bribery, and forgery, Madam Speaker. That is what is being voted on right now in this bill. That is what's being debated in this bill.

And the government will accuse us of being dramatic. The government will accuse us of using hyperbole, Madam Speaker, but it's right here in black and white: the Election Commissioner is being terminated. That is insane. That is actually insane. It is a type of thing you would never expect to see in a justice system like this, the type of thing you would never expect to see in a democratic institution like this. Every single thing that this building stands for, that this Chamber stands for is being attacked by this bill, and that is not hyperbole.

It is not too much to say that this will fundamentally damage the trust Albertans have in our democratic institutions, and that's not my opinion, Madam Speaker; that's the opinion of the Election Commissioner. That's what he wrote in his letter when he found out he was fired summarily through the media. That's what's shocking, that this government has so little respect for that office, the office that has fined their party over \$200,000, that they fired him through the media and now are ignoring that this will undermine our democratic independence, our democratic institutions, and independent offices of this Legislature. That is a type of corruption, that's a type of fraud that is going on when we vote for this bill. That is what is so scary.

I want to say it again because I think it's important that all members of the House are able to know this, but I think it's something that is – you don't want to get caught in a cover-up, right? You don't want to be caught in the cover-up because there will be consequences. This attack on our justice system, this attack on our democracy, this attack on our Legislature will not be allowed to stand. It cannot be allowed to stand because we live in a western liberal democracy, Madam Speaker. We live in a democracy that is supposed to have freedoms, that's supposed to have independence and integrity, and when we move forward and fire our own prosecutors that are investigating our own parties, that will ruin it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to join some comments to what's already been said here today on Bill 22, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. This is a thick bill. As we've seen, this government has also had two previous ones, 20 and 21, which are also omnibus bills. This one changes or amends 31 statutes, so it's a substantial piece of legislation.

It does, as many of my colleagues have already shared, sort of hit at some of the foundations of a democratic state, and I guess I just – you know, there are different sorts of categories, categorization systems, but I came across just some principles of democracy that I think are worth talking about at this point because I think that this bill jeopardizes some of those principles. Certainly, I know that my colleagues care very much about having a robust, fair democracy, and we actually – for myself, I mean, that's really one of the reasons I got involved in politics, because I really wanted to make sure that people were engaged and that anyone could be a representative if they did the work and had a set of values that they wanted to champion.

You know, I grew up in Alberta, and I grew up in the Peace Country. My views were often in the minority, but I had deep roots in what my values were. I often was the dissenting voice in the classroom, but I know what I believed, and my roots have only grown deeper through the years. I'm an Albertan, just like the folks in the room, but I haven't been, a lot of times, the majority. I have had the dissenting voice. But that's what's so cool about a democracy, that we honour that dissenting voice and that we are a tolerant society and that we know that people can have different values but still coexist in harmony or, hopefully, close to harmony.

Some of these principles that I just want to identify. Just fundamentally, you know, we accept the results of the elections. We know what's happening in this House. We know that we are 24 members here in the opposition. Of course, that's not enough to be a majority, so the government has the majority, and that makes them in charge and make decisions.

But in a healthy democracy, of course, there are opposition voices that can be heard, and sometimes opposition voices can actually influence the government enough that they may change decisions because they will see some aspect of what's being shared and think: ah, we should have integrated that into that plan. A democracy is not just: that government won, and then nothing more can be said about it. There's lots that can be said about it. I'm sure that the governing party right now would say that when they were in opposition, they too influenced the government, which was the party that I represent. It is kind of a give-and-take. It's not just an absolute dictatorship or anything.

Certainly, we know that democracy has to have accountability. We talk about citizen participation. That's sort of fundamental to a democracy, encouraging that, enhancing it. Controlling abuses of power: we want to make sure that people aren't, you know, using their positions and taking advantage of that. You have economic freedom. People have choices. They can choose to work in a certain field. They can join unions. People can do all sorts of things. We believe in equality, that people have the right to opportunities and that people sometimes need a hand up to have them access those opportunities. We believe in human rights. Anyway, there's a long list of sort of aspects of democracy, and I just wanted sort of to remind my colleagues in the House that those underpin the decisions, the things we do each day, how we conduct ourselves in this Legislature.

**10:30**

Bill 22, to get more specific here, is challenging some of those tenets, principles of democracy. Of course, I along with my colleagues in the NDP caucus here do have some trouble with it. As the government clearly sees, we've been focusing on a key aspect of Bill 22, which is the most egregious piece of it, which is the firing of the Election Commissioner. We all know – it's been said clearly in here – that there's an ongoing investigation into the leadership contest of the UCP; \$200,000 has been levied in fines. A lot of those people who were fined are now in the court system fighting those fines, so it's not settled. Even though the fines have been levied, there are, you know, defences on either side going ahead. There's much work to do.

It is a deep concern that the current government would want to fire the commissioner unless, you know, there's something that we don't know about what's gone on. Are they trying to hide something? I mean, transparency: I didn't get far enough down my list, but transparency is also another sort of tenet, principle of democracy. We need to understand how things are happening, so we need to have transparent processes. This change has really created a lot of fog, I guess, very little transparency, so that concerns me greatly. We know that in order for, I don't know,

justice to be done – like, who is going to carry on with the work of the commissioner? How will the evidence be secured? What will be done to make sure that fair processes are continued? I don't hear the government really explaining that.

I mean, there's been a firestorm of response to this bill in the media, you know, social media but also in the mainstream media. I just wanted to refer to an *Edmonton Journal* columnist. Keith Gerein wrote a piece today about it, and I just want to share that with the House. What he says is:

When a government charges ahead with a move as seemingly brazen as this, it can indicate only one thing. Alberta is now being governed by those who have lost any fear of political fallout, a machine that has come to interpret its election mandate as a blank cheque to do whatever it wants, no matter the optics, the cost to accountability, or the threat to democracy itself.

I just want to pause there before I go on and just make a comment. That is something that we do hear from the government over and over again, that because they have a majority government, no other voices can be heard. Somehow I don't have legitimacy, or I'm being told that I don't have legitimacy in standing in this House. I find that extremely offensive. I mean, when they were in opposition, they had every right to stand up and champion their values. I have that right right at this moment, and I take offence when I'm told that just because we don't have a majority government, I have no voice. I do, and I know my constituents voted for me so that I would share that voice. I think that Keith Gerein's comments here are very articulate in that, you know, that is sort of the narrative that we are hearing from the government.

I'll continue with his words.

For those still gamely trying to keep up with the government's agenda, the election commissioner at the centre of this – Lorne Gibson – is the same one who in just 16 months of work, has imposed 30 letters of reprimand, punished nearly 90 instances of political over-contributions, and issued more than \$200,000 in fines to people connected with Jeff Callaway's UCP leadership campaign.

The same commissioner who is responsible, in part, for what little the Alberta public knows about that scandal, and who may well be investigating further alleged malfeasance connected to the UCP race, including what role [the Premier] may have played.

In short, if there was ever an independent officer of the legislature who proved his or her worth in such a short time, it is this commissioner.

**High praise for Commissioner Lorne Gibson.**

Still, the UCP government says it has two legitimate reasons for firing Gibson mid investigation and placing the responsibilities of his office under the control of the Chief Electoral Officer.

First, the move will save close to \$1 million over five years, and second, it will put Alberta back in line with other provinces that do not have a separate, independent commissioner's office.

In effect, the UCP would like the public to see this as a purely administrative move with no larger impact whatsoever, rather than an attempt to obscure alleged party corruption [and] government corruption.

The UCP's rationale rings hollow in two respects, according to Gerein.

To begin, the idea that Alberta should have the same election law enforcement model as other provinces comes across as hypocritical, considering the UCP has been eager in other instances to break from the pack, whether it be to create a separate minimum wage for youth or try to impose geographic restrictions on doctors.

As well, saving \$200,000 a year – approximately what it costs to deliver health care for five minutes in Alberta – is the government equivalent of scrounging the couch cushions for

loose change. It's hard to imagine the UCP would see those paltry savings as worth the political blowback, unless there was an advantage at stake.

**Yeah. What's that advantage?**

The fact that the government plans to invoke closure on the bill . . .

It's true. The government gave us notice that they were going to invoke closure before they introduced the bill, so any talk that they didn't do that is mythical.

. . . and limit debate to three hours, also tells you how much confidence the UCP has in the legislation standing on its merits. (Not to mention the fact that [the Premier] is spending the next few days in Texas, 3,500 km away from annoying questions about the move).

Ultimately, the overriding concern here has to be for the progress of any open investigations, particularly the UCP leadership probe, which includes some unfinished court challenges.

The government says it expects all such investigations to continue. However, they also admit the decision of how to assign staff resources, and whether to rehire Gibson – or any commissioner for that matter – will now be up to the Chief Electoral Officer.

And even if the current electoral officer, Glen Resler, decides to let the probes stand, his contract is up in April, giving the government an opportunity to find a new officer less interested in investigating.

Then he goes on to say this:

To no one's surprise . . . Albertans are already comparing the move to that of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has shown an inclination for trying to obstruct any institution or individual investigating him.

These are the words of a journalist, published today, who obviously covers Alberta's provincial government and what it does.

I mean, there are so many aspects of that that really undermine, certainly, Albertans' faith in the work that we're doing here. It makes no sense, what is going on, and Bill 22's firing the Election Commissioner makes people shake their heads. Regular Albertans are wondering what's going on. They're surprised by this. I mean, I know that this is something that is pretty important to the Premier and the UCP. They had a very large platform, and they said that they would fulfill their platform, and it's in their platform. That's their plan going forward. Unfortunately, these are things that weren't in their platform. It is, I guess, what's politically expedient. Sometimes, you know, they're saying one thing but doing another. Therefore, people are confused, to be frank, and kind of outraged, as I think Keith Gerein does very well articulate.

**10:40**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I suspect you will table that document that you read from although it may not be necessary as you pretty much read the entire document.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are you wanting to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to 29(2)(a) and ask a number of questions of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, who spoke so eloquently about Bill 22 and some of the affronts to her sense of democracy that it represents. I couldn't help wondering, as I listened to her profound remarks about the impact Bill 22 will have in the lives of her constituents and some of the remarks that she's already received from her constituents, what indeed she thinks the reaction will be, as we all do, when she goes to meet with young students in some of the classrooms that we as MLAs visit and read to on a regular basis each year. Quite often the beginnings of those meetings with those students are prefaced with

small vignettes of what it's like to be an MLA and participate in government or opposition sides of the House and fulfill our duties as MLAs and perform the roles that we're elected to perform as members of this Legislature.

In light of this Bill 22 I'm wondering if that changes her sense of pride in trying to describe exactly what this democracy we're a part of is really founded on. I'm just wanting to hear perhaps what her initial, unvarnished remarks might be when she considers talking next time to groups of students in Edmonton-Riverview in light of the changes that this bill will bring to democracy in Alberta and the views of Albertans themselves about it and perhaps how we're seen in other jurisdictions as well.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for those comments and questions about, yeah, speaking to young Albertans who we often, you know, as MLAs – I mean, I think that's one of the most enjoyable parts of the job, going to, especially, grade 6 classes, because it's part of that curriculum where they learn about provincial government, and hearing their questions and trying to understand that. To be honest, I feel that part of the work of any MLA is being a witness – right? – to what is actually happening and understanding it. I guess we're sort of all very, I think, deeply, compared to an average Albertan, understanding the machinations of government and how it works and how it doesn't and what supports it and what doesn't support it.

Certainly, what encouraged me – and I usually talk to young students about this – is: why did you become a politician? I didn't become a politician willingly. I really had to be convinced and wooed a bit before that. I had been a social worker for 25 years, but I was frustrated with dealing with cuts after cuts. I mean, I worked front-line social work when Premier Klein was here, and he cut public programs by 50 per cent, and I just saw the devastation. I certainly had deep concerns about the choices the government was making, and I continue to have those concerns with this Conservative government.

But, you know, besides talking to Albertans about the importance of decisions that are made in this House and how it impacts their lives, earlier today I was with a group of professionals. These are adults who vote and work in our province. There were a lot of people pretty disgusted with the choices of this government. There were a lot of people who were shocked that AISH and Alberta seniors' benefit were being deindexed, that bracket creep was happening, because all Albertans are going to be paying higher taxes. This government didn't run on that in their platform. Unfortunately, they didn't honestly tell Albertans what their plan was. Certainly, these professionals I saw were very disheartened by Bill 22 and by people not having the resources to carry on with the investigation, possibly, and the lack of willingness to really support our democracy, because we want people to feel better . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I entered politics to represent people, regular, average, everyday people, because I am one. My background is construction: early mornings, black coffee, and hard work, a training ground where contracts are still done on a handshake, a look in the eye, and based on one's character and integrity. In fact, I ran my business under the name of Integrity Builders for more than 13 years and built a reputation over that time for characteristics that allowed me to win a nomination and an election this spring. This new job as a Member of the Legislative Assembly is very different from my former career. Plain language

isn't plain. A single word can change the meaning and connotation of an entire phrase, and nothing is as straightforward as snapping a line and cutting a sheet of plywood, where you measure twice and you cut once. I understand that world, and I am still learning this one.

But I know people, and the Minister of Finance looks me straight in the eye and has a solid handshake, and I trust him. I also know that that may not be a good enough reason for many people, so I began reading Bill 22 to learn for myself the truth that is written there, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God. On page 21 of the bill, under 153.093(5) it says:

Any employment contract between the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section, held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act is terminated on the coming into force of this section.

Pretty straightforward that that person is terminated.

It carries on in subsection (6). That says:

The person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section, held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act may be appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer as the Election Commissioner pursuant to the Public Service Act.

So that individual could have their job back if they're deemed to be worthy of it.

As stated by the Minister of Finance and completely true, the Election Commissioner is removed by this act but can absolutely be put back in place at the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer should he or she be deemed the best choice of that office, not by an elected official, not by this government in power but at arm's length and in line with the practice of nearly every other provincial Legislature in Canada. I think that's pretty straightforward and clear.

In the same way, under 153.093(2)(f) it says:

An investigation commenced by the Election Commissioner under section 153.09 of this Act or section 44.95 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act before the coming into force of this section may be continued by the person who holds the position of Election Commissioner.

The only challenge I see here with some legalese or that kind of thing is the word "may," meaning it may continue or it may not continue based on, presumably, the experience, understanding, and character of the Election Commissioner as well as the evidence or lack thereof, and I leave that to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer and whomever they may appoint to the office of Election Commissioner.

This bill, in fact, in the vast majority of its changes, in plain construction language, cleans up duplications and redundancies of agencies, boards, and commissions, predominantly to save Albertans money. By eliminating waste and bureaucratic growth, this bill makes good, thoughtful decisions in light of our current fiscal situation, which is not sustainable and on a trajectory to reach \$100 billion of debt. That is a legacy I will not leave for my children, and I will support this bill.

I started this evening speaking about trust. It is clearly evident that trust is truly lacking in our society today, but I will continue to try to build trust where I can and whenever I can, just like building a construction business, by doing it one person at a time. Like we used to say in construction: just keep nailing, and it'll all come together.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

10:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?



Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the main bill, Bill 22? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move an amendment, which reads as follows . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before you read the amendment, could you just wait till it's distributed to me?

Hon. member, this will be known as amendment RA1. Please proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. I move that second reading of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that dissolving the independent office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process in Alberta.

Boy, that's putting it mildly.

Madam Speaker, I think that of all the bills I have ever seen come before the House, this is the one that I probably find the most objectionable. The reason I say that is because it strikes at that which is most fundamental to how we govern ourselves, that which is most fundamental to how our institutions are set up. It strikes at the rule of law, but in this case, you know, we're talking about something that does impact the rule of law, the rule of law and specifically the decision of the Election Commissioner, so not just the rule of law but the perceived and actual fairness of our electoral process. I think that that should be a huge concern to everyone in here, and I hope that members in this House will support this.

I think one thing that's worth clarifying is that the members opposite keep rising and saying: well, this is a debate about, you know, whether there is one person or two people making this decision and how exactly the legislation is written and who's in charge of whom. But that just misses the point so fundamentally on so many levels. The point isn't who should have jurisdiction or who should investigate what or whether there should be one or two or what the efficiencies are; the point, Madam Speaker, is that the man was terminated in the middle of an active investigation into the very people who are terminating him. I mean, those points about who should investigate what and who's in charge of whom and what the legislation says are all incredibly important points but not as important as the fact that he is investigating members of a political party, a political party that forms the government in this province currently, and members of that same government, of that same political party who are being investigated are coming forward to remove him from his office.

He has issued 211,000 and some dollars in fines to date against multiple different individuals. Every time, it seems, that this issue comes up again, more individuals are found to be complicit. I mean, we're literally talking about envelopes of money. Those are some of the allegations. I think that should be a huge concern. I think the fact that the Election Commissioner has levelled so many fines, the fact that the RCMP is investigating related matters should be a huge concern.

What message does this send, Madam Speaker, to those members of the RCMP? What message does it send to those people who are also investigating allegations of fraud around this same matter? I think the message that it sends is: don't look too deeply; we may decide to get rid of you, too. I think that's a message that's pretty

concerning. The idea that those who are in power can remove oversight of themselves is a huge concern.

You know, we hear people talk about the rule of law a lot. I feel like it's maybe a concept that doesn't penetrate that deeply. Fundamentally, what it means is that you, that I, that every person in this room, that every person in this country are subject to the same laws, that we are all equal before those same laws. Decisions about how those laws impact us, decisions about whether we have violated those laws are not based on who we are or who we know or how much money we have or who our friends are. Those decisions are fundamentally based on our own actions. Different circumstances, different application, but fundamentally everyone gets the same rules.

I can't imagine a principle more fundamental. I mean, go to a class of kindergarten children and ask them whether it's fair to play a game where everyone has to abide by the same rules except the person who's chosen to be in charge because they get to remove from the game anyone who calls them out on violating the rules. I think it's pretty straightforward that no one would consider that acceptable.

That isn't all the bill does. Part of the concern is the number of unrelated ideas that are rolled together here. This bill also attacks pensions governance. For instance, teachers in this province have had the ability to have an equal say over the use of their pension funds for a number of years. I think that's pretty appropriate, you know, if it's their money. These are educated professionals. They have a direct interest in this matter. It's been this way for a number of years. They care about their own retirement future, and I think it's reasonable that they care about the future of their retirement savings, so they want to have a say. What could be more democratic than saying that they are permitted to elect representatives to have that say on their behalf? This bill changes that.

It also has an impact on the retirement savings of many other folks. We worked long and hard when we were in government to ensure that many different types of employees had a say through their union about the use of their pension funds. LAPP, for instance, was certainly referenced earlier today. I think that's important. I think it's important that people deserve to have a say in their retirement funds.

You know, the member before me spoke at length about regular people and how he's here to represent regular people. Well, at the same time, he's defending a bill which takes the rights away from regular people to have a say in how their retirement funds are managed. It imposes on them requirements about – essentially, the implication by the Finance minister earlier today was: we have to have the ability to remove the chosen representative of the workers because that person might not meet the standards of competence. We're not worried about management, and we're not worried about us meeting a standard of competence, but we're really worried that the workers might choose someone that doesn't meet that standard. I think that that is a pretty unfair thing to say.

**11:00**

I think this bill does a lot of things, and I think one of the big concerns here is that we're talking about not only an enormous number of things that are done in this bill and an enormous impact on the financial concerns of the people that were in the pension programs impacted; we're also talking about something that impacts the rule of law and how we govern ourselves as a democracy.

To bring forward a huge bill like this, all rammed together, and to move that closure can be used at all three levels before the bill is even introduced is a big concern. You know, the members opposite are going to argue: well, we didn't invoke it right away; you had

more than three hours of debate. I mean, that's a pretty low bar, but I think the concern is that it's not the hours of debate. It's not the number of hours that we're here in the middle of the night talking about this bill. The concern is the overall time for the public to notice. I'm not here to stand on my own convictions alone. The purpose of my having the ability to debate this bill is not because I'm a special person somehow. It's because I'm someone who was elected to represent a whole lot of other people, so the concern isn't about whether or not I have time to speak to the bill or whether or not I have time to look at the bill. The concern is about whether or not my constituents have time to understand the bill.

Given that we're looking at potentially seeing this pass before the end of the week, in four days, when we're sitting overnight, when I have no opportunity to even go back to Calgary and speak to my constituents about this bill – incidentally, my office had received already this morning more than 50 e-mails about this bill – you know, I think that's a huge concern. I think that when we attack our fundamental democratic institutions and we try to do so in such a way that we can move it through in less than a week in order to avoid public scrutiny, that should be a big concern. That's what this entire thing is about, avoiding public scrutiny. The removal of the Election Commissioner is about avoiding future public scrutiny. The moving of the bill to remove the Election Commissioner so quickly is about avoiding public scrutiny. I think that that's a really big concern.

The idea that the members opposite are talking about, "Well, that person could have their job back if they're deemed to be worthy of it," that's kind of exactly the concern, right? Who's doing the deeming of the worthiness? The idea that investigations should be independent, that those investigating breaches of the law should be independent is fundamental.

You know, the government loves to accuse us of fear and smear, but a lot of this isn't even coming from us. A lot of this is coming from the media, is coming from the people out there. I don't think there are actually words that I can use in this place that are sufficient to describe my feelings about this bill, which is fundamentally attacking the rule of law, attacking our democracy. I think that that is a pretty big concern.

I was reading sort of historically different things about the rule of law, and many moons ago Samuel Rutherford used this to argue against the divine right of kings. That's the thing that I'm concerned about here, right? The idea that the king had divine right was something that was being argued against. This was the idea that the rules applied to everyone else but because the king was divine, they didn't apply to him. I don't want to see that happen here in Alberta. I don't want it to be the case that we live in a place and we can say: well, the rules apply to everyone unless of course you're investigating those who are in power, in which case you will be removed from your office because the rules ought not to apply to them.

I believe that every person in this province should be concerned about this. This isn't a conversation about how the rules should be enforced or who should enforce them or whether it's better to have one agency or two. It is a conversation about whether those rules ought to be enforced at all. I think that that is a huge concern.

[The Speaker in the chair]

If we're saying that the rules should be enforced so long as they aren't enforced against members of the governing party, I think people would be appalled to hear that, to hear that this is a conversation that we are having here, and I think it is a sneaking in of American politics into our system because I think we've seen some very similar things in the U.S. with the current President

around the idea, you know, I mean, even the consideration of removing people that are investigating you. That's not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, we don't even know how or if the evidence is being secured from this investigation. I mean, that's a pretty big concern. Are they transferring that evidence to the RCMP? Where does it go?

I think, you know, the Election Commissioner himself, his comments are very telling. "I am concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process." I think that this whole incident calls into . . . [Ms Ganley's speaking time expired]

And with that, I will sit down.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on RA1. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley caught my eye.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I just want to confirm that we are talking about the amendment before us here now. It seems like the member that put the amendment forward didn't talk a lot about the amendment, talked about everything but it, including teachers' pension, which I don't see in the amendment at all. She talked a lot about, you know, complained about the lack of time for debate, but of course she took a lot of time talking about everything but the amendment which she brought forward. So, I guess, when we're complaining about the hours of debate that they may or may not have, it seems bizarre that they would take time and talk about anything else other than what's at hand, which was, of course, the amendment.

Now, I just want to go through this amendment a little bit. It suggests "that dissolving the independent Office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration." Now, it's always good to go right back to the bill itself, I think, because, obviously, there's all sorts of spin going on from the NDP and their friends, and a lot of times that spin doesn't always represent the truth or what's actually written in the bill.

When I look at the bill here, it says on page 20, section (11), and this is under the heading "The Office of the Election Commissioner is dissolved."

(2) On the coming into force of subsection (1), the following applies.

- (a) the property, assets, rights, obligations, liabilities, powers, duties and functions of the Office of the Election Commissioner become the property, assets, rights, obligations, liabilities, powers, duties and functions of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Now, obviously, this amendment suggests "that dissolving the independent Office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration." So I guess what this amendment is suggesting is that there's no independence of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Now, that's a pretty serious allegation, I think. I think that we have some confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer being able to do their job in that office and the Chief Electoral Officer himself doing his job, but obviously, the members opposite are suggesting that there is "the real and perceived integrity of the election process." So they're suggesting that there could be a problem with the integrity of the election process if the Election Commissioner's "property, assets, rights, obligations, liabilities, powers, duties and functions" are turned over to the Chief Electoral Officer. Now, that's pretty serious.

Now, I'm going to go on and read the next section. First, I'll read:

(2) On the coming into force of subsection (1), the following applies:

- (b) the records in the custody or under the control of the Office of the Election Commissioner are transferred to the custody and control of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Again, when we apply this amendment's suggestion that dissolving the Election Commissioner office "could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity," it's another serious allegation, that the office of the Chief Electoral Officer is somehow going to have a perceived lack of integrity and lack of independence.

11:10

I'm just going to go on and read the next paragraph.

(2) On the coming into force of subsection (1), the following applies:

- (c) an existing cause of action, claim or liability to prosecution of, by or against the Office of the Election Commissioner is unaffected by the coming into force of this section and may be continued by or against the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

So any suggestion by the members opposite and their allies, that are out running around spreading information, that any action or claim or prosecution that's going on with the office of the Election Commissioner would somehow be stopped by this bill is absolutely false. It states clearly in the bill that that will be continued "by or against the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer." Again, this amendment is suggesting somehow that the Chief Electoral Officer could have a lack of independence or real and perceived integrity. When we look at things like that, we understand that this amendment, obviously, has no bearing at all and should be voted down.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on RA1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to provide some debate.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise this evening to speak to the amendment to Bill 22, which, I would say without hesitation, is an understatement of the session given the impacts that the bill would have should it be passed. I fully support the intent of the amendment to Bill 22 to not have the bill read a second time because, as the amendment states, "the Assembly is of the view that dissolving the independent Office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process in Alberta."

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the statements contained in the proposal to amend Bill 22 are certainly an understatement and something that is underscored by the current Election Commissioner himself, who in a media release today eloquently expressed how, in fact, any democracy should be very careful to protect the ways in which it conducts elections. His intent, of course, in making his disappointment known about the fact that indeed he was going to be losing his position and that the position would be terminated stemmed not from a personal sense of loss but about "the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process," and that's a quote from his statement released today.

He goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that his "disappointment stems from [his] firm belief that the citizens of Alberta must have confidence and trust in the integrity of all aspects of the provincial electoral process." That is critical and fundamental to what we're speaking about this evening, confidence and trust. I'm just

wondering how in the world we as Albertans in many facets, in many different situations can seem to express and have the same sense of confidence and trust in our electoral process should this Bill 22 pass unamended or pass at all. We're speaking to the amendment now to not have the bill move forward. That confidence and trust is something that many of us in this Legislature and Albertans in general have proudly exuded when we would go and speak about our province and our electoral process and our democracy in many different forums.

But now with this Bill 22, which proposes to fire the Election Commissioner, a bill which invokes closure at every stage of debate to basically get it over with quick so that it's out of the news and Albertans can move onto something else, the government's hope is that this will be something that is a quick Alberta snowstorm. Boom, it's over and melted and the grass will appear and everything is normal again, but this flurry is going to be a deep pit, a deep, heavy snowfall in the government's agenda, Mr. Speaker. It's something that they can avoid by adopting the amendment which we proposed as the opposition.

It's amazing that less than a year into its mandate we're at this place, Mr. Speaker, where a government that proudly came in talking about how it had won the right to govern, a majority in Alberta, is now with its tail between its legs, looking to fire the Election Commissioner because it seems to be afraid of what this commissioner might turn up in upcoming investigations and indeed in ongoing investigations that are alleging some very, very serious breaches of the Election Act.

In committee a number of months ago, previous to the last election, I believe it was Alberta's Economic Future Committee – I could stand corrected – there was a member, actually the proud, final standing member of the former Progressive Conservative Party to name himself and brand himself as such in this Legislature. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, the former classmate of mine at Queen Elizabeth high school, stated, somewhat shockingly to me, when we were talking about setting rules around the nomination process for leadership races within political parties in Alberta – he stunned me by saying very forthrightly and resolutely and in a committed way that was really disappointing to me that government has no business in a nomination process for leadership. This really set the tone for what I began there to understand was the actual heartfelt belief of even Progressive Conservatives and now in the subsequent government and Conservative parties that there should be a closet within which nominations for leadership and leadership races within political parties are shrouded.

The crux of the matter is that the UCP government members believe that the process by which political leaders are chosen by their parties should be held in secret, as that member indicated to me so strongly, that the public has no right to review the political parties' leadership races and nomination procedures. It should be done without public scrutiny, away from the public eye, in secret, without rules or at least without any public knowledge of what the rules are that the public could scrutinize, out of sight, out of mind, none of your business. Mr. Speaker, I was very shocked and very disappointed in that member, whom I as well as many other members of this Legislature had great respect for, but that is one view that I certainly had nothing but derision for.

To see that Conservative members of this Legislature thought that a political party is some kind of private club to which public scrutiny has no right was shocking, yet that's exactly the type of attitude that is embedded in Bill 22, and we see it, unfortunately, with pride being displayed by the members opposite in the government. I'm just wondering why they come to these seemingly entitled views of what indeed political parties are and what indeed a democracy is. It astounds me that anybody who's

in this Chamber, who's gotten elected, gone through the process of a nomination meeting and so forth could end up having the opinion that somehow the public doesn't deserve to know how those decisions are made within a political party, yet that's the attitude of this government. Bill 22 is a prominent display of that total disdain for the respect for our democracy that we would hope all members of this Chamber and all citizens of this province and indeed the country have.

11:20

As I mentioned to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview in my remarks to her under 29(2)(a), how indeed are we going to face schoolchildren that we talk to and proudly talk about our democracy, that we represent, in the light of this Bill 22, which proposes to remove an Election Commissioner who actually is involved in active investigations into alleged abuses of power and corruption on the part of the current government? Even the grade 6 classes – and I shouldn't say “even” because they have really impressed me whenever I go there with their level of understanding and their knowledge of the political process, and that's evident when you walk by the hallways when they come to do their mock parliaments. Their understanding of our democracy and what it should be is actually pretty deep, and I really am saddened to know that our grade 6 classes in these coming weeks are going to be talking about this piece of legislation and scratching their heads and, hopefully, having lots and lots of questions about what it is that this government is actually up to.

Out of sight, out of mind: why would the government want to do such a thing? It should be an interesting discussion for grade 6 classes, probably even right through to high school and university level classes, as to what this government is up to. I know that my constituents are talking about it. They're astounded. In fact, professionals in this province are talking about it, and they're not happy with it. They're ashamed, they're embarrassed, and they're angry about it. Now, even today, looking to speak with members of the Alberta Real Estate Association who were at the Matrix Hotel earlier this evening, members opposite from government may not have heard the shrillness of the arguments that I heard, but certainly I had a number of the members there talking to me about how shocked they were that this government would actually try to pull a stunt like this, to try to actually pull the rug out from underneath the Election Commissioner,

who has been hitting UCP leadership campaign operatives with massive fines,

in the words of Mr. Don Braid, a journalist who's of some repute in this province, not one who is necessarily the friendliest to the progressive part of the world in this province. But I'll tell you what. Mr. Braid is not overly impressed with what's going on with Bill 22 and this government. He goes on to say in his comments:

Bill 22 rolls the commission duties into Elections Alberta, the outfit that governs the wider realm of running and regulating elections.

Chief electoral officer Glen Resler [then] can decide if he wants to rehire Gibson, whose job was to enforce the election and financing laws.

Now, he goes on to say:

The government says current investigations will continue, whether Gibson is retained or not. All fines and penalties are still valid . . .

although that remains to be seen. A lot of questions are up in the air.

People I was speaking to at the reception for the Alberta Real Estate Association were dumbfounded that this current government would have the audacity to fire the Election Commissioner in the middle of an investigation which wasn't, frankly, going their way.

Even in the light of, you know, major fines that had been levied and perhaps other unforeseen judgments coming down and maybe even more fines, this government chooses to pass or attempt to pass legislation, Bill 22, to shove under the carpet the current Election Commissioner, have the role usurped by the Chief Electoral Officer, and expects that Albertans are going to be hoodwinked by this and that it will go away very quickly without much public debate.

Well, I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. They are about to be very, very surprised if that's what they thought, because the large number of complaints that were received by the Election Commissioner early on after he was returned to office after being fired by a previous Conservative administration speaks to the fact that Albertans wholeheartedly disagreed with that member's desire to operate political parties as a private club. I speak about the former Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who said in committee to us that he thought that political parties were basically tantamount to private clubs and that public scrutiny was not something that the electorate deserved to have and had no right to oversee, these private political clubs that they were so entitled to belong to.

I wonder aloud about other conversations we have as MLAs when we do our constituency work. What are we to say to newcomers to this country, Mr. Speaker, who want and are hungry and thirsty to learn about our democracy and who come from places where there is no democracy, where the rules are broken constantly if there are any rules, who struggle to put in place rules that emulate what we thought were the gold standard here in Canada and in Alberta, where the election laws are something to be proud of, where you can run to be a leader of a political party in full knowledge that the rules that are in place will be followed? Yet these newcomers will question exactly what's going on in this province if this bill passes, and rightly so.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen on 29(2)(a).

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, and I want to thank my colleague for his comments. He spoke at several points about the feedback that he has received from Albertans, whether it was at an evening mixer that he attended or talking to school groups. I just wondered if he might be able to tell us if he as an MLA has been contacted by his constituents around the contents of Bill 22 and how that has informed his position on this piece of legislation and through that to the reasoned amendment that is before us, that we are currently debating.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung if you'd like to respond.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the hon. member's comments. I've always appreciated her deep and insightful analysis of any issue we're debating in this House, and that certainly goes for this debate tonight on Bill 22 and the amendment thereto that we are discussing right now.

Other members in this House have spoken earlier this evening about this debate being one of the rule of law versus the rule of force. That is something that I was alluding to when I spoke about us as members of the Legislature or even members of the public who happen to be at gatherings where we find ourselves talking to newcomers about our electoral process. What are we to say to newcomers to this country who want to learn about what this gold standard of democracy that we supposedly have in this province means to us and how it enshrines the rights of everyone to, without fear of reproach and without any expectations of interference, fairly

achieve public office, a leadership role within a political party in this country, in this province, knowing that the rules are going to be followed and that there are consequences for not following those rules? Those consequences are what keep in check those who might want to thwart the rules and just, in fact, go ahead and take over a leadership position in a way that many of these newcomers have seen in countries that they left or escaped in order to come to Canada. Many countries come to mind, Mr. Speaker, where those individuals who come to this country will tell stories of there being no democracy, no opportunity to have a representative government, no opportunity to even run for office. It simply would be a dictatorship position where a leader would expect to rule for life, perhaps, and have no inclination to ever give up power or to ever give any credence to or believe that anybody had any ability or right to openly oppose them.

11:30

That seems to be what's happening, Mr. Speaker, in this province. A government, that was elected last April, a United Conservative Party government, seems to be implying with Bill 22 that they have a divine right to govern without opposition, without necessarily bending to the rule of law. That's something that's shocking as far as the history that we have in this country, a proud history of representative democracy, that we have fought world wars to defend. My family members have certainly been overseas to defend it. I know that those who we recently remembered on November 11 as having served and fought for our country to defend our values, our democratic process and our electoral process, would be turning over in their graves to look at what this government is trying to do to our electoral process here in Alberta. Never mind my late grandfather and my father, who both served in the Canadian Army to protect our democratic rights, but even my grandmother, who served at home, keeping the family farm operating during wartime, who later was elected numerous times to serve on village council in Thorhild, never ever in her wildest dreams would have thought that this would come to pass.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on RA1. I see the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock — for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all the changes that went on in the previous four years, I can understand why you're confused with regard to my constituency having changed from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock to Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock now. That was just part of a lot of the changes that occurred during the previous term of government. I was here as a member of the Official Opposition at that time, and I feel I can spread some light on how we came to this point and on some of the concerns we had when the previous government was introducing the changes to the Election Act and to how we would be overseeing the process within Alberta.

You know, the amendment is to essentially not utilize this act and that we not read it a second time. I believe that Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is long overdue. I'm thankful that the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance is taking it seriously, finding ways to do governance better, to do process better, to be able to find efficiencies within how we're able to move forward in a manner that respects the taxpayer's dollar and respects the fact that government needs to be accountable to the taxpayer on how their money is being spent. I believe that the plans that are being proposed in Bill 22 will lead to better governance, will lead to more efficient government, and I'm happy to support it at this time. I

believe that we should continue on with our process through second reading.

You know, there were many times during the previous government that I had concerns over how the previous government would just continue to not look for ways to manage more efficiently, manage better, but on the contrary the previous government continued to spend, spend, spend without any consideration for Alberta taxpayers.

We even take a look with regard to the changes in the Election Act and the process with regard to the elections. Some of the advice that our Leg. Offices Committee was receiving was not adhered to. When we take a look at even things such as door-to-door enumeration, the advice was that it has been seen as being ineffective, yet the government of the day decided that \$11 million spent on an enumeration was good value for taxpayers' money. I had other concerns with that.

With regard to Bill 22, you know, we get a lot of letters and a lot of people that contact us as MLAs with what they've heard, whether it's in the media, whether they've heard it from their acquaintances, whether they've heard it from their association, and they want clarity. They want clarification on what is happening: how is this going to affect them, and is this going to be a good move to move forward?

At times I've been able to speak with individuals. I had a call from an individual just yesterday morning in the office here. I rarely get a call on the phone, but the individual was very happy to be able to talk directly to me. He was very concerned with Bill 22 and the implications it had with regard to the office of the Election Commissioner. But when I was able to direct him to the bill, able to help him read through the bill, it alleviated a lot of the concern that he had with regard to the process moving forward and how the government has decided to essentially amalgamate into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer the functions of oversight over elections.

Everybody is of the opinion or there are a lot of people that are hearing that the Election Commissioner has been fired. The Election Commissioner office will be terminated. The individual that's currently holding the office will be terminated. It may be appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer if he so chooses, and the investigations that are continuing on will continue on. All the due process that has been going on in the Election Commissioner's office will be transferred over to the Chief Electoral Officer, and we can expect that those processes will continue on. To make it as if all things have come to a halt with regard to the investigations: I think that's misleading the public. The media, I believe, needs to properly inform the public of what truly is going on.

You know, I reflect on the office of the Election Commissioner, and I was very involved in committee with regard to that. We also were dealing with I believe it was Bill 32 during the previous mandate, and we as the Official Opposition had serious concerns with the direction that the previous government was moving in. We had identified early on in the process that there were concerns about the establishment of another office of the Legislature. We understood that there were going to be increased costs, that those were probably costs that could be controlled within the office of the Chief Electoral Officer much better than by establishing a whole new office with new locations, new people, and that the Chief Electoral Officer was in a good spot to be able to proceed with this duty.

11:40

You know, back in December 2017 there was much debate over whether or not we needed to move forward with that. I quote from *Hansard* — let's try to find out who was speaking here; it looks like

the member from the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – with regard to the establishment of an independent officer of the Legislature with the election commissioner.

While it is important that we ensure that we have the appropriate checks and balances within our electoral system, adding an independent office of the Legislature I do not believe is the right path forward with respect to the independent elections commission. If, in fact, the government would like to have an independent elections commissioner, there is no reason why this commissioner cannot function within the confines of the chief electoral office.

Okay. We go further here about

an independent elections commissioner within the province of Manitoba, a province where good portions of the NDP world view have come from, and as such, they like to point to it as a real pinnacle of NDP thought, so they like to do some of the things that they've done there. One significant difference between Manitoba and what they're proposing here is that the independent elections commissioner in Manitoba actually reports to the Chief Electoral Officer and works inside the confines of that office, not as an independent office of the Legislature.

We heard earlier today that the other provinces have this structure and that it is working fine for them.

The setting up of a completely separate office: I believe it was a budget of around \$2.2 million that was introduced earlier tonight in Committee of Supply. Was that good spending of taxpayer dollars? We can look further into the debate with regard to the elections commissioner and those types of things and find that there were many, many individuals from the Official Opposition at that time that were very concerned with the redundancy of the separate office and also with regard to whether or not it was going to provide good value for taxpayers.

I think I will move forward with some of the concerns that were being brought up from the work that we did as a search committee when we went to look for an elections commissioner and some of the concerns that were brought up at the time when the motion came forward to the Legislature highlighting the concerns of the private members of the Official Opposition that participated on that search committee. I quote myself from *Hansard*, May 1, 2018, on many of the things that we were concerned with while we were on the search committee. Going forward, we as members on that committee from the opposition were not in favour of appointing

an individual as Election Commissioner who did not have all-party support.

During the last term I served on

a number of the search committees that we've put in place over the last couple of years, with a very good working relationship during search committee meetings, and we were able to come to unanimous support in all committees. But from the outset of this committee . . .

Again I'm quoting from when the motion came forward.

. . . in December it became very apparent that the members from the governing party were prepared to move forward in a way that I would consider to be somewhat haphazard, a little bit reckless.

We have long been disappointed in how members of the government caucus chose to conduct themselves throughout the entire search process. It became evident at our first meeting, at the end of December, that government MLAs were determined to proceed in a reckless fashion by forcing the Legislative Assembly Office to compose a job posting and a position profile for a brand new position in less than 48 hours.

This was a brand new position, yet the government was ready to just move at breakneck speed, without proper due diligence. We saw where the previous government decided that it was prudent to advertise for this position during Christmas. These were all concerns that led to where the members from the opposition on that

search committee could not find it within themselves to actually support the motion that came forward to the House. We had made many of these concerns known to other members on the committee. For all Albertans to have confidence in the individual – we felt that it was important that that individual would be able to have the full confidence of all Albertans. Just given the history of the individual that was hired as the Election Commissioner, there would be concerns with the fact that that individual had already gone into a position of suing the Alberta government, with concerns of that.

Like I say, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance . . .

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women has the call.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, and thank you to the member. One thing I just wanted to reiterate – and the member was mentioning this – is the 48 hours in which this office was created.

The interesting thing was, too, that – there were a couple of things that I would like to provide some clarity on. One of them was a mistruth that was brought forward, hopefully accidentally, by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, that Mr. Gibson was fired. He was not. His contract was not renegotiated, and that needs to be extremely clear. Let me provide some clarity. His contract was not renegotiated. He had moved here from Manitoba and had not had his contract renegotiated and therefore was frustrated and therefore chose to sue the government at that time. He was not fired. His contract was not renegotiated. There's a huge difference there. Let's provide some clarity there.

The second thing is that the implication that Mr. Resler is not capable of doing his job has been completely implied. The intention is, of course, there because if the government is making a decision to choose at that point in time that they know best and that they're going to go forward with the decision on a new commissioner without any consultation nor a proper, appropriate time to create a tenure to bring a person forward for that particular position, over Christmastime, too, spending an extra \$20,000 bringing people in in order to be able to create said position, a redundancy that we all understand to be true at that point in time – that's the second piece.

The third thing is that Mr. Resler himself had stated at that time that he was completely capable and confident and had the people that he needed to do the job at that time. These are some of the facts.

The question I have – and potentially the member could answer this for me. As I understand it, the Chief Electoral Officer is independent. Would you please speak to that, about the independence of the Chief Electoral Officer, their job, and the competency of Mr. Resler?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock should he choose to respond.

11:50

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have full confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer and his abilities to be able to oversee this function within his office.

I do have one comment that I was not able to get to. When the motion was brought forward before the Legislature, in our meeting as the Committee of Leg. Offices we felt that it was prudent for allowing Albertans to know what contract was being entered into with the Election Commissioner. We now are able to see what that contract was. We now are able to see the direction that the previous government decided to go in. Under the sunshine list disclosures we have a compensation of \$159,523 for nine months' worth of work, which translates into just shy of \$213,000.

My amendment to the government motion of the day was essentially to allow this disclosure to happen so that Albertans could see what was happening within the process of fulfilling the duty to hire an Election Commissioner. The salary was advertised, the position was advertised with a range of \$152,818 to a top of \$212,801 for a maximum term of five years. The previous government felt it was prudent to hire an individual that, although fully capable of being utilized as an elections consultant, never really gave me any indication that he had done any significant investigative work. So to start that individual at the top of the range, at the top salary, for a five-year term concerned me. I felt that there was opportunity to negotiate with the individual to ensure that we were in a position to move forward, to essentially go with fewer years in the term. So we proposed that amendment. The previous government decided that that was not necessary. The amendment was voted down.

I believe that that was, in my opinion, a failure to recognize the need for accountability and transparency. They could have provided more confidence to Albertans that they were doing something that we could all be confident in.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on amendment RA1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods would like to provide some comments.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment that my hon. colleague has introduced. It may be because I was at the NDP Provincial Council this past weekend debating resolutions, but I have to say that this amendment does not go far enough. I will be supporting it. [interjections] Your conventions aren't like that? Okay. Just an inside joke over here. This amendment does not go far enough. I will be supporting it, but I want to speak to, first, the amendment as it is and then what I think the amendment is missing, which I think is appropriate context for why we believe that this bill should not be read right now and instead should be amended by deleting all of the words.

First, let me start by talking about what the amendment does talk about. The amendment talks about the real issue, the negative impacts that dissolving the independent office of the Election Commissioner could have. Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the members of the government caucus throughout the debate this evening, and I really don't understand the mental hoops that they must be jumping through to make this seem logical to themselves. To be here and to pretend to not understand why this has reached national media and why it seems as though everyone who comments on politics or reports on politics or watches politics or is an expert on politics is looking at this situation and going, "You know, it doesn't pass the smell test" – in fact, many people are using far stronger language, and we're seeing this coverage across Alberta but also across the country.

For the members of the government to pretend to not know why this might be perceived as a problem, to terminate the person who is investigating issues related to their 2018 leadership contest and 2019 election, is disingenuous. I don't believe them. I have heard the call-in talk shows on the radio with countless people calling in to say: I voted UCP, and I cannot believe what this government is doing. I have seen the e-mails that I am copied on that your offices are receiving. Albertans believe in a strong democracy. Albertans believe in trust in their elections. Canadians are proud of that democracy. The actions of this government to fire the person investigating them and then to jump through some mental hoops to try to justify that is a little bit beyond belief.

Also, how can the member who spoke before me, from Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, stand without laughing to talk

about how crazy it was that they had to write a job description in 48 hours when I am being expected to pass an 80-page omnibus bill that touches 31 pieces of legislation, that impacts every Albertan on the election side, 400,000 Albertans on the pension side, countless others, with all the minor changes inside, in what looks like will be about 72 hours? Seventy-two hours for this large omnibus piece of legislation, and the member opposite is talking about the two days it took to write a job description as if that – again, the mental hoops, the connections that are not being made to connect the arguments they are making on one hand and what is actually happening in this Chamber and in our province shock me because if you're going to fire the person who's investigating you, at least acknowledge that there is a perception that there could be a problem with that.

Also, acknowledge the words in your bill because they say very, very clearly that all of the ongoing actions, claims, liabilities, prosecutions, anything that this office is doing – it does not say: it will continue. It says: it may continue. The words "will" and "may" and "shall" are incredibly important when drafting legislation, something that I and many of the colleagues who sat in this House before understand very well. This government has chosen to include the word "may." They can stand in this House and say, "Of course, everything will continue," but the legislation doesn't say that, and they know it.

They say that the Election Commissioner is not being fired, but the legislation says that he is. He is being terminated, and he is receiving severance which I believe is less than what was in the contract that he signed. His severance is being lowered. He's being fired. The position is being demoted, yet – I mean, honestly, this could potentially be called the Lorne Gibson clause because they are getting rid of Lorne Gibson. They are getting rid of a particular individual who is the individual investigating them, and they are jumping through hoops to try and explain it away. This from the party and from the political side of the spectrum that talks about the rule of law constantly. In this case, they are jeopardizing our democracy. They are jeopardizing the trust that Albertans have in what happens in our province.

I genuinely believe that this reasoned amendment is very important because all matters relating to the 2018 leadership race and the 2019 election should be closed before any changes to this officer take place, if only for the perception. Let's not talk about the real, what actually – the government believes that there is no real impact to the investigations, but you have to admit that the perception is out there clearly among Canadians that there is a real issue with what's happening here. The perception is really important here. We need to make sure that people feel trust in their democracy and trust in their government – and I can tell you that from the conversations I'm having with my constituents, they do not feel that there is trust here – so that is what this amendment does say.

**12:00**

I began my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by saying that this amendment does not go far enough, because I believe that all of the words of this bill should be deleted also because of the terrible impact to pensions. I have 200 e-mails from teachers extremely concerned about the move of their pension funds to AIMCo, done in a unilateral way with no consultation. To date – and I did just check the ATRF website – this government has not provided a business case or analysis. The analysis done by the ATRF shows quite clearly that in all scenarios that they have run, the ATRF size has been an advantage and their returns have been better than AIMCo's and would have been better than AIMCo's, even taking into account

the analyses of bigger is better and that if AIMCo had more money, they could find efficiencies.

I think that the 400,000 people who are part of ATRF, LAPP, PSPP, SFPP deserve the time to know what is happening with their pensions and to understand it. Now we're back to the 72 hours, Mr. Speaker, because Albertans are not being given the time to consider the contents of this omnibus legislation and the impacts to them and their lives. When we're talking about pensions, we are talking about the money these workers saved and put in place for the future. We are talking about something very key to these Albertans.

Now, timing is everything, and the timing of the debate of Bill 22 is interesting to me because, of course, our Premier is away in Texas. Almost the entirety of the debate on this legislation may happen while he is away, and that is deliberately done. [interjections] Oh, I apologize. Mr. Speaker, allow me to withdraw. It is getting late, and I should not have recognized that.

I would also note from a timing perspective that tomorrow the new federal cabinet will come out, and that's going to dominate a lot of the headlines, maybe cover up a few of the things that are happening. I think that we need to focus on the fact that Albertans deserve to know what is happening in this legislation. I think that's an incredibly important point, and the number of letters and submissions that I've received from Albertans leads me to believe that that is the case.

Now, speaking of pensions, I do want to suggest that we have some serious questions not only about AIMCo's ability to generate returns that are higher and better than ATRF's but in the case of PSPP, LAPP, SFPP and the statements that this minister has made around AIMCo's independence from government. In AIMCo's statute it says that the corporation must act in the best interests of its clients, but AIMCo is still a Crown agency that must follow directives from the Treasury Board. A directive is broadly defined to include policy under the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, APAGA, and that prevails over AIMCo's act. So as we debate this reasoned amendment, the government needs to explain how AIMCo will maintain distance from government when it's clear that Treasury Board directives are a key part of how government can influence what AIMCo is and is not doing.

On other things that this bill touches on, again talking about the referral and how it does not go far enough, I would include in the referral the negative impacts of moving teachers' pensions without consulting them and the damage that does to trust, the concerns and the stress that that has caused. I would include the damage it does to remove AUPE's seat at the governance table. Losing that seat, losing that influence over their own members' money is a real issue, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that this bill should not be continued because of the new competency matrix, that the government is trying to process, giving them a veto over the nominations that the sponsoring organizations make, because it's suggesting that the members, the workers, who put their money into these pensions will somehow nominate incompetent people. Which of the members of the boards now are incompetent? Please identify them. If you suggest that we are implying that the Chief Electoral Officer is incompetent in some way, which we have not and would not, certainly in your legislation and in your answers in question period you have directly stated that there are issues of competence with the people currently on the board. I would love to delve into that more because I would argue that there is not an issue of competence.

The Finance minister also completely skipped over a good chunk of this bill in his introductory comments. I would note that he didn't mention that this bill allows political parties to merge. Why would this bill be doing that, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps the government should be telling us all about the changes that directly

impact their party and the parties that they were formed from and the financial arrangements between those parties because they've legislated it across several pages of this bill yet not spoken of it in this House.

Here we are with potentially less than 72 hours to process a bill that is 87 pages, across 31 pieces of legislation, that talks about so many different things: the ATB Financial mandate, changing the mandate to allow them to be more commercial and cost-effective and to avoid undue risk of loss. When I was a part of Premier Notley's government . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Ms Gray:** My apologies again. I withdraw that.

. . . of the previous government, we specifically gave ATB Financial more money to give out more loans to support businesses. By giving them the direction to avoid undue risk of loss, does that mean fewer loans for small businesses? Is this fewer loans for farmers? Is that the decision that ATB Financial is going to have to make?

These are some of the concerns that I have, Mr. Speaker, so this reasoned amendment does not go far enough. There are some serious concerns with this bill and serious concerns with how this government is moving forward with this legislation. The 400,000 people who are part of these pension plans and all Albertans concerned about democracy deserve more time to fully understand what is happening in this omnibus piece of legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

### Bill 23 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 23 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

### 12:10 Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers with respect to the bill? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I rise to table some amendments. Shall I pass those up to you? How do I get those to you?

**The Chair:** The pages will come and grab the amendment from you. Just wait till I receive it before you proceed.



**Mrs. Aheer:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A2. Please proceed.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Madam Chair, would you like me to read this out?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Okay. On Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, the bill is amended as follows:

- A Schedule 1 is amended
  - (a) in section 1(d) adding “to the Minister” after “delivery”;
  - (b) in section 20
    - (i) in subsection (1)
      - (A) in clause (a) by striking out “April 1, 2020” and substituting “the coming into force of this Act”;
      - (B) in clause (b) by striking out “March 31, 2020” and substituting “the day before the coming into force of this Act”;
    - (ii) in subsection (2) by striking out “March 31, 2020” and substituting “the day before the coming into force of this Act”;
  - (c) in the schedule
    - (i) in section 1
      - (A) by striking out “22%” and substituting “C”;
      - (B) by striking out the following:
        - B is the estimated designated assistance amount.
 and substituting the following:
        - B is the estimated designated assistance amount;
        - C is the prescribed percentage applicable in the prescribed circumstances.
    - (ii) in section 2
      - (A) by striking out “22%” and substituting “C”;
      - (B) by striking out the following:
        - B is the designated assistance amount.
 and substituting the following:
        - B is the designated assistance amount;
        - C is the prescribed percentage applicable in the prescribed circumstances.

I will take a moment to describe what all that means.

Madam Chair, I rise today to table amendments to the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

I’ve heard just absolutely fantastic stories from filmmakers and producers since taking on my role, and I’m super proud to say that our government will be maintaining funding for the film industry with our budget and moving forward, and this is despite some very interesting words from many in the opposition. The industry will be receiving the same amount of funding as they have in previous years. There will be a transition period as we shift from the previous grant under Culture to the new tax credit under Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The previous government was not listening to the industry and severely mishandled the previous grant program, leaving our government with quite a mess to clean up. I’m really proud to say that the creation of the film and television tax credit is just actually the first step.

As of April 2019 there were \$92.5 million worth of grant commitments scheduled for payment between 2019 and 2022. We will be meeting all of those commitments while still introducing our new film and television tax credit. We are committed and we did

commit in our platform to developing a film tax credit, and the hope is that it’s designed to attract large productions and series to Alberta. We are transitioning from an existing grant program because it not only puts us in line with other provinces, but it is what the film industry has asked us to do.

Since film production began in Alberta, in 1917, our government is the very first government to have the vision and leadership to recognize the need for a tax credit program. These amendments have come after consultation and a lot of consultation with industry. My colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism has worked tirelessly to meet with many film producers, unions, and studios since the budget was tabled, and I’m really happy to say that we’re addressing some of their concerns. We’ve had a lot of chances to listen to the industry. In order to provide confidence to the production companies and industry, we’ll be launching a new intake process. We really want to have this happen as soon as possible. These amendments create a new application process, the intake to start no later than January 2020.

If principal photography began after March 1, 2019 – this gets a little complicated – the production company then will be eligible to apply, in the first year of the program, from the date of proclamation up until March 31, 2021, in order to accommodate the companies that had applied to the original screen-based production grant, which was originally under Culture, in May and August of 2019. The transition takes a little bit of time, but we’re trying to accommodate all of those things in between. This will allow the companies that applied for the screen-based production grant in May and August of this year, 2019, to then be able to apply for that tax credit, which is what they’ve been asking for. That will actually happen starting April 1, 2021 – sorry. That’s that tax credit.

Starting April 1, 2021, at that point in time, there will be no retroactivity allowed. We’ll make those accommodations initially up until then, but starting on April 1 of the 2021 year, there will be no retroactive ability. The companies that applied between March 1, 2019, and the day of proclamation as well as those who apply between the day of proclamation, somewhere in January-ish, and March 31, 2021, will be eligible. This gives us a little bit of flexibility. We really listened to the industry to help this move a little bit faster.

We’re also amending the tax credit formula. This formula will be set out in regulation rather than legislation. This gives us a little bit of flexibility, especially because there are a lot of different scenarios, as we know, around the industry. We want to make sure to be as flexible as possible for them. Not all productions are the same, and there are many needs that are different between the applications, so we want to acknowledge that and make sure that we take that into consideration. Production companies will receive an authorization letter that will include – what we’re wanting to do is to have an estimated amount of tax credit that they can receive based on their estimated eligible production costs.

What will be included is that there will be a subtracting of any designated assistance that they may have already received – that’s grants and applications from other ministries – towards the same production. These changes mean that the actual amount of the tax credit that the production companies will receive will be based on their actual eligible production costs minus the other forms of designated assistance. Again, the designated assistance is other grants that they may have received for the same production in other ministries. This ensures that the film and television tax credit only supports eligible production costs incurred in Alberta. This has been something that we’ve all been working on diligently to make sure that we can make that happen.

We’re also making a change that more clearly defines what it means for production to be completed. This is absolutely an

imperative piece of accountability for the film industry and for government. It ensures that the film and television tax credit supports projects that are complete and available for distribution and broadcast. Regulations will further clarify completion of production. We're very much looking forward to working with the industry to figure out what that definition will look like.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm moving that we rise and report Bill 23 and report progress on Bill 20, but I don't know if you need me to adjourn debate first. You don't. So I am moving for the committee to rise and report Bill 23 and report progress on Bill 20.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

12:20

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 23. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all members of the House for their hard work today. I move that we adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, November 20, at 9 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:22 a.m. on Wednesday]

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