Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, November 20, 2019

Day 44

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
First Session

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP), Government Whip
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Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63 New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 20, 2019

Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, please be seated.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. Great to see you tonight. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 20.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much and good evening, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. 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 Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is so ordered.

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 22
Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

Ms Ganley moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of 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.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment November 19: Ms Gray]

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has approximately zero minutes left. As such, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment perhaps for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to provide her a moment to conclude her thoughts.

Mr. Dach: I just wanted to offer the opportunity to the hon. member to finalize her comments if indeed she had not completed what she wanted to say on the topic.

The Speaker: That is a brief question or comment. I appreciate that from the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has the call.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague. I was, when we were last speaking to Bill 22, referring to the notice of amendment that was moved by my colleague from Calgary.

Given that I have just a few minutes left in the debate on this amendment, I think perhaps I'll just summarize what I had said during the larger portion of time I was given, which is that this amendment does not go far enough. The amendment suggests that all words after "that" be deleted and substituted with the following:

> Bill 22 . . . 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.

I do support this amendment. The reason I feel that this does not go far enough is because there are so many other reasons to not read Bill 22 a second time right now.

Now, as the amendment speaks to, there are some very real risks with the dissolving or terminating of the Election Commissioner. In his statement about this, the existing Election Commissioner stressed that he's

> concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process.

And he remarks that Albertans should have

> trust and confidence that the election laws established by the legislative assembly are being followed and that there are consequences for those who choose not to follow them.

I completely agree with the Election Commissioner in that assessment.

Now, along with the termination of the Election Commissioner, a man who is currently investigating the governing party for election activity around the 2018 leadership race and the 2019 election, Bill 22 also includes dramatic changes to pensions that impact nearly 400,000 Albertans who are part of LAPP, PSPP, SFPP, or the ARTF. AIMCo will become $30 billion greater once all of the funds related to Bill 22 are moved from the ARTF.

I will repeat one of my earlier comments, that I have received over 200 concerned e-mails from teachers who are quite upset at this unilateral decision taken without consultation. I have it on good authority that over 16,000 e-mails from concerned teachers across this province have been sent to MLAs of various constituencies. That is of great concern to me.

As well, the removing of seats from the sponsor boards, removing AUPE's seat, moving that to be management, non-union, is a removal of the voice of workers. As well, by putting on a competency matrix, this government is saying that they do not believe that workers can choose competent people to govern their pensions, so I'm very concerned about that.

Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned about the changes to ATB Financial in changing their mandate because I am concerned that it could mean fewer business loans, fewer supports in rural Alberta, and a change to how ATB manages its business.

I support this amendment, and I hope all members of this Assembly will support this amendment, that will allow Bill 22 to be rethought, that will allow this government to not take action that many are viewing in an incredibly negative light not only here in Alberta but nationally as it has received national attention, and that will allow the existing Election Commissioner to be able to complete all matters relating to the 2018 leadership contest and the 2019 election before any changes are made to this office. I would

expect that the governing party, who is such a believer in rule of law, would understand that Albertans are proud to be part of a very strong democracy and that anything that calls into question those democratic systems should not be proceeded with.

Those are my concerns, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate my colleague for asking me to finalize my thoughts.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) has expired.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment today? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to be able to share my thoughts on Bill 22, which is before us right now, and, more importantly, my concerns with this legislation, the first concern being the fact that we are debating this Bill 22 at such an incredibly fast rate. I mean, this legislation has not been before us for very long, not enough time, most definitely, for me to share my concerns and hear the concerns or comments from my constituents, which was a comment that was brought up by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View yesterday evening. I share that concern, and I imagine that all of my colleagues do.

I imagine that some of the government members do have concerns with how quickly we are moving with this legislation as well because as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View stated, the fact is that it's one thing for us as members of this Legislature to be able to digest the information that is before us, especially in something as big as this bill is, Bill 22, the omnibus bill that it is, but the other fact is that we need to be able to have an opportunity to be able to speak to our constituents about the widespread changes that this is making to many areas, both ABCs as well as pensions, which are incredibly important to the people who are going to be impacted by that, as well as the transparency of our democracy. That is what I will spend most of my time discussing, I imagine, in my time right now.

The fact is that I got into politics – what's it been? – four years, eight months ago because, well, I believed in democracy. When we go to places like classrooms and we talk about our role as legislators in this building and the role that we play as representatives for our constituents, we talk about the importance of democracy, and we talk about the importance of the party system as well and what role that plays in the democracy here in our province.

I'm very concerned with what we see before us, really, the disappearance of transparency when it comes to things like the leadership race. When we were first elected, in 2015, we took swift action, as you may remember, Mr. Speaker, to remove things like corporate and union donations. We lowered donation caps or the ability for money and power to influence our elections. We brought the leadership races under the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer, if I remember correctly, and we made PACs more transparent and limited the ability for influences other than political parties and individual members to influence our elections. I believe wholeheartedly in those changes that we made over the last four years.

7:40

Now, in contrast, what we have before us is a government bringing forward Bill 22, where they are effectively firing the person that is investigating a leadership race where there were allegations that have been proven to be true, to the tune at this point of over $200,000. Now we have legislation put before us by this government that would actually eliminate that position, eliminate the person that is, on an ongoing basis, right now, this moment, investigating the internal happenings of their leadership race within their party. That is very concerning to me, Mr. Speaker, because, once again, I believe that our role in this Legislature and as representatives of our communities is to strengthen democracy. Unfortunately, it seems that on the other side of the House, through this legislation and other pieces that have come before us, they do not have those same beliefs. That is very, very concerning to me.

Now, another concern that I have with this legislation and the fact that they're eliminating the important role of the Election Commissioner is the fact that this UCP government is essentially signalling that it doesn't really matter what happens behind the closed doors of leadership races and party politics within your own party as long as you get elected to be government. And if you're elected to be government, well, then you can do things like fire the investigators that are looking into wrongdoings within your own party. That is very concerning to me, and I think that sends a lot of red flags to not only the members on this side of the House but all Albertans.

If you've been following the debate and the discussion around this on social media, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you have – and I'm sure all of the members of this Legislature have been – they would see and you would see that there is not a lot of sympathy for this piece of legislation before us when we look at the firing of the Election Commissioner and, effectively, the reduction of action that is going to be taken, I suppose, against this party and the wrongdoings that they have in fact been implicated in. That is very concerning to me. I don't want to have to go back to my constituents and go back to the kids in the classrooms that we visit on a daily basis or a monthly basis and tell them: sorry, kids, but today, you know, party politics was more important than the democracy that we have in our province. That is something that I'm going to have to discuss with my constituents.

Now, once again back to the fact that through my discussions with constituents and seeing the discussions online, there is – as far as I can tell, anecdotally, I suppose, the only people that are supporting this legislation are, of course, the members of the government caucus up to this point and their press secretaries. Now, there are a lot of them on social media, and they get paid good money to tweet about these things, but the fact is that those are the only people that I see supporting Bill 22. That also should send red flags to people across this province.

Now, once again, this Premier has tabled legislation to fire the Election Commissioner, who is currently investigating both the party and members of the UCP caucus that are in this House today, and that is very concerning to me. The fact is that whether members of the government should be able to actually speak to this in the first place is a concern for me. The ethics around that, whether people that are involved with a party that is under investigation should be allowed to pass legislation that is going to affect that, is a concern for me, Mr. Speaker, and I imagine it is a concern for all Albertans.

Now, I think about how this legislation looks from the outside. Of course, we talk a lot about the dome effect, being in this House and maybe only hearing one side of things or the opinions of the members only. I think about what this looks like from the outside looking in. If I'm a constituent or an Albertan out there and I'm looking at this legislation before us and I see that once again a governing party is trying to stop or slow down an investigation that has implications for their own members, that's very concerning for me. I think that's something that the government caucus should be taking seriously. I only think that, you know, one day they might look back on this and say: maybe that day I should have supported democracy instead of attacking it. I imagine that will come up at some point. I hope.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this is an abuse of power. This is attacking the very foundation of democracy and the very foundation

of the rule of law, which the Member for Calgary-Mountain View went on at length about yesterday, the fact that we should all be governed by the same laws no matter how much money we make or who we are in society. The fact is that this government is using their power to pass legislation about something they did not campaign on. I didn't see in their platform to fire the person that was investigating their party, but here we are. That is a concern for me because, first of all, the government does not have a mandate to pass this legislation, and second of all, they did not consult on this legislation.

This caught everyone off guard, including the Election Commissioner, who found out that he was going to lose his position and lose the ability to continue his investigations through the news, which is also very concerning to me. If we were to take it at face value that this government was in fact removing the person that's investigating their party for efficiency reasons, well, maybe they should have had that conversation with the Election Commissioner before they decided to put in black and white in their legislation that his position would be terminated, Mr. Speaker. We talk about cutting red tape. We talk about holding consultations almost daily, yet here we are. We have an important role in our electoral system, the Election Commissioner, finding out over the news that he is losing his job, being terminated, which is very concerning.

I'm sure that the media release that the Election Commissioner put out has been talked about, but I would just like to point out a few of the things that he said in that media release. Now, he said that this disappointment, the disappointment that he has from not being able to continue his investigation, stems from the firm belief that the citizens of Alberta must have confidence and trust in the integrity of all aspects of the provincial electoral system, not just the casting and counting of ballots on election day. I agree with that, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the words that the Election Commissioner said in his media release.

I think, once again, that the party system that we have in our province is an important part of our democracy. It should be held to the same standards that we hold our elections to. Once again, it is a concern. The integrity of the system can be attacked if a government says: "Well, it's all fine because we're government now. You know, the past is the past. The leadership race: many fines were divvied out, but those people are working in our offices now." The people that were part of the investigation as well as part of creating what is being investigated: those people are working in the offices of this government, and that is also a concern for me, Mr. Speaker.

Now, once again, I appreciate that the Election Commissioner is concerned with what this means for our democracy. He goes on to say that it's not the fact that he's losing his job, by any means, though he appreciated the opportunity to serve Albertans as the first Election Commissioner. The fact is that in firing the Election Commissioner, the signal that it sends to Albertans, once again, is that you can do whatever you want behind closed doors of your party as long as you're elected to government after the fact. That is very concerning.

Now, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, like I said earlier, that those Election Commissioner investigations that are ongoing include members of this very House. Allegations of fraud, forgery, improper inducement, and bribery: those are all very serious concerns. Once again, I would echo the fact that I'm concerned that members of the government are even speaking to this legislation. I think that there is an ethics issue there, but I suppose that will rest on their conscience and not mine.

Now, it is without any precedent for the government to fire an investigator in the middle of investigating the government. It truly reeks of entitlement. I'll go back to the fact that I got involved with politics because I wanted to strengthen democracy. I believe in the foundation that we have here in the province, which is being eroded through Bill 22. I got involved because I was very concerned with the many years of PC government about the entitlement that we saw, the mass floor crossings, sky palaces, and simply about the fact that the government became so comfortable and so complacent, because they had been elected for so many years, that they stopped listening to the people of Alberta.

7:50

Now, this UCP government has moved swiftly to take the place of those Progressive Conservatives that I worked so hard to get unelected, yet here we are, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately today they have a majority. We will see if the people believe that they should keep that after things like we are seeing in this legislation, which are very concerning.

Now, we've also seen this Premier allow top officials in his government to do things like take – oh, actually, this was the Premier himself taking $16,000 chartered flights for him and his friends to pancake breakfasts. That's concerning to me, Mr. Speaker. Once again we're seeing the entitlement of this UCP government quickly coming to the surface.

Once again, we heard about senior staff under the Premier going to London and expensing thousands of dollars to taxpayers for hotels, lavish five-star hotels with vitamin C showers. Mr. Speaker, have you ever taken a vitamin C shower? I haven't. I'm interested to know what that feels like, but I imagine I wouldn't expense it to the taxpayer if I decided to go down that road. That is concerning to me, Mr. Speaker.

Now, once again, by firing the Election Commissioner, it's become quite clear that this Premier has forgotten that he was elected to serve all Albertans, not just the ones who voted for him, not just the ones who donated to his leadership race, and not the ones who donated to his election either. Truly, he has no mandate to do what is before us in Bill 22.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I imagine that you can appreciate the gravity of the changes to transparency within our elections from this legislation before us, the implications that are before us, but I also want to focus on the fact that there are changes to public-sector pensions.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood would like to add a brief question or comment.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add a question and comment to my colleague for Edmonton-West Henday. I really appreciate his remarks, particularly his early remarks when he was speaking about teachers and about how he's hearing from a lot of teachers. I would just like to recognize that I see a number of teachers in the crowd in the gallery tonight. They can give us a wave. These are hard-working teaching professionals who . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, just as a way of a heads-up, recognizing that you're new to the Assembly, I just wanted to provide some caution. It is not customary for members of the House to engage members of the gallery under any circumstance. While I also have a love and appreciation for teachers and am glad that they're here, I certainly wouldn't want to start a habit of engaging members in the gallery.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will play the new card, as I have many times already, and note that I respect very much the teachers who are here and all the teachers across the province. Myself, I was a teacher as well.

I have to echo the member's comments that I've had countless e-mails. I just checked my e-mail, and we're getting hundreds of e-mails about Bill 22 and about the concerns related to teachers' pensions. Teachers are feeling frustrated, they're feeling disrespected, and I would like the member to just comment a little bit more about what he's heard from teachers and the disrespect they're feeling from this UCP government with Bill 22.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to continue for a short while, so thank you for that question. I also appreciate that we have – now I'm going to do it. I won't recognize them, but I appreciate who we have here today with us.

So getting to the point: my concern with the changes to public-sector pensions that we see within this legislation. First of all, there was zero consultation done on this, Mr. Speaker. Once again, this was not in their platform, and that should be concerning to every Albertan. It most definitely is concerning to the people who are within the public sector that have pension changes within this legislation. This government, the members that are here today, should be ashamed of themselves. That is the truth, Mr. Speaker, and I imagine they are. I imagine that, just like my office, they are getting inundated with hundreds of e-mails from concerned public servants in our province, and they should listen to them. I can't imagine what the members of the government are telling those people when they write back and say: oh, you know, I understand your concern, but the Premier told me to vote a certain way, so that's probably what's going to happen. I understand that the government says that they'll have a free vote. We'll see how that free vote plays out as this debate continues.

I have a great appreciation for the teachers and all public servants across our province: nurses, health care providers, and all public servants. I would never support something as atrocious as what we're seeing in Bill 22 and the attack on public-sector pensions. I have had teachers come to me at community events and raise concerns. I imagine, once again, that the government members have as well, but the difference is that I'm going to support those public-sector workers by voting down this terrible piece of legislation. We will see how they vote at the end of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there's approximately a minute and 37 seconds left under 29(2)(a). I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually have to throw it back to the Member for Edmonton . . . I do apologize, I don't know the name of the constituency. What is a vitamin C shower?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday, if he chooses to respond.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's not anything – well, I guess I talked about it. With that top public servant under your government, I imagine that you can ask that member, considering how much they paid for that opportunity. Like I said, I've never been involved in a vitamin C shower, but maybe he can ask that public servant, who gets payed something like $300,000 a year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there's approximately one minute left under 29(2)(a) if anyone would like to ask a brief question or comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the Member for Edmonton-West Henday's comments around Bill 22, some of its failings, shall we say. One of the things that I wanted to just go back to very quickly if I could, Mr. Speaker, is around the termination of the Election Commissioner and how that transition will occur, bringing that position back into the Chief Electoral Officer's purview. You know, we've heard very, very clearly from the Minister of Finance that this decision was made on the basis of what I like to call bottom-line decision-making. If we're here to simply save a million dollars, maybe I should suggest . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are on the amendment. If I can just provide a little bit of clarity to the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday, it would be fine for you to thank people for attending. The challenge is when we cross the line from thanking them for being here to engaging them to do something that they're not allowed to do. As such, we would hate to put them in any sort of position where security would be concerned.

I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rising.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate having an opportunity to speak yet again to this duplicitous Bill 22. You know, of all the things I've seen go through this House over the last five years, this is absolutely the most treacherous bill I've seen come into the House with an apparent intent to reform agencies, boards, and commissions and government enterprises but with an underlying intent to take control away from the people of Alberta and put that control in the hands of government members so that government members can use the resources that should be available to the members of society in the province of Alberta but use those resources instead to pursue the aims of government in their very narrow, rigid, backward-thinking manner. I think this is completely unacceptable.

I've had an opportunity previously to speak about my concerns about the attacks on unions and the undemocratic nature of trying to undermine unions and the rights of people to act in collective ways, to control their lives and their places of employment. I've also had an opportunity to talk a little bit about some of the underlying very antidemocratic moves here that assail the underlying need in society for the population to have an opportunity to be well educated in the democratic process so that they can appropriately engage in that process and hire the best people during the election process.

8:00

So having talked about those things, I want to talk about the fact that this is really a duplicitous bill, because what it says it is doing on the surface is not clearly showing what it is in fact doing underneath. Whenever we question this bill and whenever we say that we have a lot of concerns about what is happening here, members of the government – the Minister of Finance and other people – stand up and say: "Nothing is happening here. We're just simply shifting dollars from point A to point B, and the same things will happen all along." But I want to remind people that something much more pernicious is happening here, and that is that the monies are being taken from places where citizens in the province of Alberta have control and have a voice over what happens to that money, and they're being brought into a place where only the ministers have control over those things. I think that's the truth that we have to pay attention to.

When this Finance minister says, "Oh, we're simply taking the money from the Alberta Sport Connection, and we're moving it into general revenues, but we'll simply use the money in the same way that we have used it in the past," that sounds nice. It sounds like:

"Okay. Fine. Instead of having this body distribute the money to some 80-plus sports organizations in the province, we'll simply move it into government, where there will be less bureaucracy. We'll reduce the number of bureaucracies, and we will continue to do the same thing."

But what they don't tell you is that under the previous arrangement there was a set of parameters given to the people who distributed that money such that we knew how that money was going to be distributed. We knew the process they would go through to ensure that that money was democratically distributed. Now that money is going to be moved into the general coffers of the government of Alberta, and decisions are no longer subject to the parameters that they were previously subject to when the money was under another act such as the Alberta Sport Connection Act or the historical resources fund.

Let me be clear about what's happening here. This is money for the Special Olympics. It was decided by a group of Alberta citizens that this is how this money should be spent. Now that money is being taken away from them, and there is simply a hope that that money will continue to be there.

Now, you have to ask yourself: "Why is the government doing that? Why are they taking the money away from a very useful and productive process and bringing it in-house, where instead of having citizens of the province of Alberta do that as representatives of all of us, only a very small group of people get to make that decision?" Once they get it away from the other acts, they no longer have to be responsible to the intent of those acts. They can simply decide on any day to not do what they say today they are going to do. The Minister of Finance says, "Don't worry about it; we'll keep doing the same thing," but once it's out of the act, there's nothing to hold them to that.

Now, I'm very concerned about the groups that are being denied these funds and have no guarantee that they will have those funds available to them again next year – like the Special Olympics or the museums such as the Glenbow Museum and so on – those organizations that are being folded up under this act.

But, more importantly, I am concerned about what's happening with the teachers' pension fund, because exactly the same thing that I just talked about with these two different organizations, that are being wrapped up under this act, is happening to the teachers' pension fund. Right now the teachers have a good relationship with people who are investing their dollars and have people on the board who can speak to how those monies are invested and have ultimately been very successful in terms of their investments and have had a good return.

What happens, though, when that is shut down and that is moved into government, into AIMCo, is that suddenly the teachers do not have the same level of control that they always had. Suddenly decisions are being made not by people whose funds they are but by people who have a variety of motivations for controlling those funds. This is why I say that this act is duplicitous. It is an act that is really treacherous to the people who have, with all integrity, put their pension funds into the hands of managers who they've developed a relationship with and who they have been able to work with to get a good, positive return.

Once it has been moved into AIMCo, what actually happens is that the government gets to decide whether or not they want to do what the teachers want to have happen or not. Now, the Minister of Finance will tell you: oh, no; we're going to do the same thing once it's in government. But what's really clear is that they can say that they're going to do the same thing, but there is no actual control to force them to do the same thing. They may do the same thing, especially in the first year, when they're trying to get things settled down and they're trying to make sure that people aren't upset, but then afterwards they can slowly – or perhaps quickly, because they seem to do these assaults on the citizens of the province pretty quickly. In seven months they've engaged in quite a wide range of dishonest and corrupt activities that we are challenging here on a daily basis.

A year from now, two years from now the government may suddenly decide that all of that money that's now in AIMCo would be beneficial for government purposes in some other thing than to provide the best returns for the teachers. It says that explicitly in the act, that AIMCo must do the things that the government directs it to do. It's written into the act.

That's what's most dangerous about this act. This act is saying on the surface: "Don't worry. Everything will be the same as it always was. We're just moving where money is being held and being invested." But what's really happening is that it's being moved from a place where people have control and the ability to respond to a place where they do not have control and do not have the ability to respond but where the government has a great deal more ability to control, which I think is a very autocratic way to treat other people's money. I think it's something that we should be very, very concerned about.

I think that the underlying intent of this act is one that people should pay a lot of attention to. On the surface, we keep being told: "Don't look over here. There's nothing to see. Don't worry about it. It's all going to be fine. Nothing is really going to be different." Whenever you're told that, you always have to ask: "If nothing is really going to be different, then why are they so dead set on making sure that this happens? Why would they bring in a bill and then have the Premier disappear for the week that it's being discussed?" Why would they make sure that – I saw your look. I got the point. Sorry.

The Speaker: We obviously wouldn't want to refer to the absence or presence of a member of the Assembly as that would be considered to be a point of order. I'd just offer some caution, then, to the member.

Mr. Feehan: I didn't say that he disappeared from the House. Sorry.

The point here is that what we're seeing is a government ramming through a piece of legislation as quickly as possible because they know what it really means, and they know that it takes a while for the citizens of Alberta to receive the information that they need in order to be able to respond. The quicker they do it, the sooner they get to a place where even if you do learn what is actually happening, there is very little that you can do about it because the act has already been enacted.

8:10

I think that that's the intention of this act; that is, to take control away from the citizens of Alberta and do it at such a speed that they are unable to respond because they simply haven't had time to not only get the content of the act but to understand the implications of that act. That's the thing that we're very concerned about here.

If I look at this whole act, the underlying theme remains the same, whether it happens to be taking the teachers' pension plan away from them so that it can go into government control, whether it's taking the money away from the Special Olympics, whether it's taking the money away from the Glenbow Museum, or whether it's taking money away from citizens who are receiving AISH. In all of these cases it's about the government bringing unto itself the power and control over other people's money and making decisions such that those other people will be subject to the whims of the government of the day. When they're under their own act, the advantage is that it's moved arm's length away from the

government so that there are people who are not sitting members of the House who are making decisions. Now suddenly it's all coming into the House and into government hands so that they can make decisions. I think that's something that we have to be very, very concerned about.

We know that this act also has a very strong intent to get the government itself out of trouble. An officer of this Chamber, the Election Commissioner, has been investigating apparent fraudulent behaviour in the UCP leadership election, has indeed assigned over $200,000 in fines against the UCP members, and has been indicating that there are many more people yet to talk to and more resources necessary to complete that application. What we have now, again, is this nefarious underlying intent to pull that commissioner out of his work site, to stop him from making a report he was supposed to make as early as next week, and to prevent him from doing any further investigation. Now, again, the Minister of Finance is going to say: "Don't worry. The same function can happen. It's going to come into government, but we promise that once it's in government, we'll do the same thing." But that's not what's going to happen, and there's no guarantee that it is.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe it was the hon. Minister of Finance who caught my eye.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have to respond to the member opposite's comments, certainly to a few of those. Firstly, relative to moving the teachers' pension plan into AIMCo, I just need to again clarify the facts. There is so much misinformation that's circulating right now, creating undue fear, quite frankly, amongst teachers and, particularly, retired teachers, that it just behooves me to rise and to clarify a number of the comments.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, the ATRF Board remains completely intact, with the same composition as it has been in the past. The ATRF Board will continue to administer the pension plan as it has done in the past. The ATRF Board will continue to provide policy direction and oversight on the investment goals and strategies related to the pension funds. What is changing is that those funds will be housed at AIMCo, again, under the high-level oversight of the ATRF Board.

The concept that this is a takeover by the government of teachers' pensions is ludicrous. It simply is not founded in any fact. The ATRF Board will continue to have that high-level oversight.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of wins in this move, but the real win is a win for teachers. The real win is a win for teachers because at the end of the day teachers' pensions will be better protected in a larger investment management firm.

Mr. Schow: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toews: At the end of the day . . .

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

Point of Order
Behaviour of Guests in the Gallery

Mr. Schow: I believe that the hon. Speaker has already mentioned engaging with the audience or members in the gallery. Just recently I heard a number of them making comments behind me as I turned around, and they were trying to engage further. I ask that maybe the members of the gallery remain respectful of the work we're doing here and allow us to continue this healthy debate that we're engaging in tonight.

Mr. Bilous: First of all, this is not a point of order. Points of order pertain to members of the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, with all respect, it is your prerogative to deal with members in the gallery. It is not up to another member in this House to tell members of the gallery how to behave.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would concur with the position of the Official Opposition House Leader. It is ultimately the purview of security to ensure that the galleries are also maintaining order. If there was ever a reason to do so, of course, the Speaker could take steps, but I don't think we're anywhere close to that at this point in time.

The hon. Minister of Finance had the call.

Debate Continued

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moving teachers' pension funds to AIMCo will ultimately result in cost savings for those pension funds as the larger investment management fund as a whole can result in economies of scale, which will result in reduced costs in the management of those funds. Our estimates are that the cost savings alone will result in approximately $40 million of savings overall per year, which will accrue to both the teachers and ultimately to Alberta taxpayers as both parties will benefit down the road with lower contributions while defined benefit pensions are maintained at the same levels. Fundamentally, foundationally, Alberta taxpayers and teachers ultimately have the same goal when it comes to public-sector pensions. Both parties benefit as returns are increased and as costs are driven down and as risks are mitigated.

Mr. Speaker, there are congruent goals in going forward with moving the actual assets to AIMCo and, again, recognizing that ATRF will continue to administer the pension plan. ATRF will continue to provide direction and strategic oversight over the investments. The board makeup of ATRF will remain the same as it's been.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there's approximately one minute remaining in 29(2)(a). I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to provide a comment.

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Speaker, if the words of the Minister of Finance had any veracity, his behaviour would have been different. If he truly believed what he just said, then he would have gone to the ATA and said, "I have a great plan; it's going to give you a better return; let's sit down and figure out how this can happen so that we would benefit all people in the province of Alberta," as he just said. He did not do that. In fact, the ATA president, Jason Schilling said, "Show us the numbers and convince us it is in our interests, instead of unilaterally seizing our pension assets." If he really did think that this was going to be a benefit for the teachers, he would have talked to them and convinced them, but he didn't believe it, so he didn't do it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:20 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Luan	Sawhney
Amery	Madu	Schow
Barnes	Neudorf	Schulz
Dreeshen	Nixon, Jason	Schweitzer
Ellis	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Pitt	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Toews
Horner	Rosin	Toor
Hunter	Rowswell	Walker
Long	Rutherford	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		

Totals: For – 31 Against – 10

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Time Allocation on Bill 22

35. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Government Motion 35 today. It is my duty to move to Government Motion 35. I do not believe that time allocation should be used lightly or often inside this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I believe that this is only my second time to use this in my capacity as Government House Leader. I do note that the Official Opposition House Leader will be on the opposite side of this motion, I assume – he may be voting for it – but just a few short months ago he was on this side of the House and would often move time allocation with his Government House Leader at the time. I have a list of comments that he made and several members across the way had made in support of time allocation and times in which they have voted for it, but I don't feel the need to go into great detail on that today.

The reality is this. We have a responsibility as a Chamber to be able to control the pace of debate, to be able to make sure that ultimately we're able to get legislation through this House. Time allocation should rarely be needed, but the reality is that at times on very few bills this is the only way to be able to proceed to be able to make sure that the Chamber can do its important work that it's responsible to do for the people of Alberta.

I would quote, Mr. Speaker, from December 4, 2013, a paragraph that the former Premier David Hancock said when he was a Government House Leader in regard to closure:

> On a few bills, very few bills actually, at more than just the committee stage . . .

At the time they were arguing whether or not time allocation should just be used at the committee stage.

> . . . at other stages of the bill, there are times when the House manages its time well, and motions of time allocation are not needed or are left on the Order Paper. As we can see on the Order Paper [in his case], there are some left from [the] spring. It is one of the ways [though] in which government business can be managed, brought before the House for appropriate discussion, timely discussion, and timely implementation.

Today I move time allocation in that same line of thought, that we have to continue to make sure that legislation moves through this Chamber in the coming days to able to accomplish all of the objectives of the 30th Legislature when it comes to the sitting before Christmas.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that often we work together to be able to limit debate sometimes for our own members. It's what government House leaders do. That's what opposition House leaders do. We choose critics when we're in opposition to respond to certain things, on the government side we choose certain ministers that will move certain bills or speak to certain bills, and sometimes we have government caucus members not rise to be able to give the Official Opposition more time. We negotiate those things. We negotiate question period rotation. We negotiate opportunities when the Official Opposition has amendments that they need to move and time grows late, where the government goes out of their way to be able to give them that opportunity. That's the reality of what we do in this Chamber. Sometimes, when things begin to grind to a halt, we have two options within our standing orders. Interestingly enough, closure has been removed from our system since 2003-ish, but we do have time allocations in the standing orders, the mechanism that I'm using today. We also have a standing order called the previous question, which helps to control time within this Chamber.

8:40

I want to be clear. Adequate time will still be provided to debate Bill 22. It's an important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and the Official Opposition has a responsibility on behalf of their constituents to debate it fully. I will provide them that opportunity. At this stage we've already provided them five hours so far. There are three stages of this legislation that we have to go through, and we will provide the Official Opposition adequate time to be able to do their important work as the Official Opposition, to bring amendments as they see fit, and to have an opportunity to be able to debate this important legislation.

But we will not plug up the Legislature. We'll make sure that the legislation that is needed for Albertans will pass, that Alberta's budget will pass, and that we'll be able to implement that budget and continue to move forward. If we do not work together to be able to control the pace of this House, we would be in a spot where we would only pass one or two pieces of legislation. That's not a spot that I'm willing to let this Chamber get into, and it's not a spot that Albertans want. They want their legislative business to be done, Mr. Speaker. I suggest, through you to the opposition, that they make the best of the time that they have so we can make sure that we make the best piece of legislation that we can.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll start off by saying that this move that the Government House Leader and the government is doing is, one, unprecedented and historic. No time in Alberta's history has a bill been introduced in the very same week that all three readings have invoked closure to limit debate. The fact that the government is invoking closure at 8:40 p.m., after a mere

five hours of debate, which is not a significant amount of time – as the hon. member knows, we have debated many pieces of legislation for many hours. The fact that the Government House Leader the other day rose to give notice for closure for three sections of the bill before the bill was introduced screams of how afraid this government is of the very legislation they brought forward to attack the very people that are sitting up there.

This piece of legislation to meddle with the teachers' pension is undemocratic. They did not ask for it. I would love for the Finance minister to respond to this House. Whom did he consult with who asked to move the teachers' pension to AIMCo? If the pension is going to save $30 million yet the teachers' board is going to have all the oversight and continue to have the due diligence over the fund, what is the purpose of moving it to AIMCo? In fact, the minister should know this – and I have a great deal of respect for AIMCo. Had the minister and this government actually talked to teachers to say, "This is what we're proposing to do with your money" – not your money; their money – then we wouldn't be here, Mr. Speaker. But the fact of the matter is that the government know they are in the wrong, which is why they've just invoked closure after five hours of debate. It's absolutely shameful. They are afraid to face the very people whose money they are trying to meddle with.

We have yet to have an answer as to how this saves $30 million. How is this better? In fact, the Finance minister should know that last year the teachers' pension outperformed AIMCo. There goes your argument that the fund can do better if it's managed under AIMCo. But the point for me is not whether it's AIMCo or the teachers' fund. Consult with the very people whose money you're touching. It's not your money. Hands off. Then to exacerbate things, Mr. Speaker, they invoke closure after four hours. Shame. Shame on every one of you for invoking closure, shutting down debate in this very House. Closure is one of the most antidemocratic methods that the government has.

I can and will say: yes, there were rare occasions that our government introduced closure. Never three motions of closure for a whole bill, introduced on a Monday and passed on the Thursday. That is unprecedented. Never in Alberta's history has a bill moved – and, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're wondering why. I've been trying to figure out why they would want to move at breakneck speeds. I can tell you that there are only two possible reasons: they're trying to hide something, so either the Election Commissioner has something really good that's about to come out, and they want him nowhere near what's going on, or they don't want him in front of Public Accounts, which is supposed to happen at the end of next week.

Otherwise, if this was merely about moving money, first of all, you should have consulted with the teachers. I'm offended by that. I am a teacher. You do not have the right to move their money, their pension money, without talking to them first. I don't care what financial arguments you make, that's their decision to make, not yours.

The fact that this government is moving this quickly, invoking closure at 8:40 on second reading after a mere five hours of debate, is unprecedented. I don't know what the Government House Leader is talking about as far as debate grinding to a halt. I don't know if that's some kind of weird joke, but five hours of debate is hardly grinding this place to a halt, Mr. Speaker. The minister claims that there will still be adequate time. According to whom? So you have the ultimate authority on what is adequate and what is not? You know what? I would venture a guess that the 50 people up there would disagree with you that the one hour for second reading that remains on this bill is adequate time to talk about their future, their retirement. They earned that money, not you. I find it rich.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 35 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Barnes	Madu	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schulz
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Hanson	Orr	Toews
Horner	Pitt	Toor
Hunter	Rehn	Walker
Long	Rosin	Wilson

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		

Totals: For – 27 Against – 10

[Government Motion 35 carried]

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 22
Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019
(continued)

[Adjourned debate on the amendment November 20: Mr. Jason Nixon]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on RA1.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to RA1. I'm left to refer at the commencement of my remarks to what the Minister of Finance recently said when talking about Bill 22 and its surrounding debate that we're having here tonight about it. He mentioned that we, in his mind, were creating undue fear. I tell you what, Mr. Speaker. If he wanted to undo fear, he'd withdraw the bill. The fear that he's creating is actually real, and it's a fear in the minds of many people who have expressed themselves throughout the last few days to all of our constituency offices. In fact, the running count, the tally, the clock count that we should have in front of the Legislature, similar to what the Premier had when he was with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation – we should have a count of all the e-mails that we're receiving on this issue. I don't know if you'd imagine how many e-mails we're at, but it's an astounding amount, Mr. Speaker: 29,000 e-mails and counting. Twenty-nine thousand constituents have written to us. My inbox is flooded. And I'll tell you: they're not boilerplate e-mails; they're not templated. They are individual letters of concern, and believe me, they are awfully angry.

I'll tell you what. Members of this House will recognize that at this late hour it's very unusual to have people in the gallery, but there are people in the gallery in force, Mr. Speaker, people whose pensions are being moved without their permission, and they are fearful for their retirement incomes. Those individuals in the gallery represent a small portion of the 29,000 and counting members of

the teaching profession who have respectfully written all of their MLAs to demand that this move be halted. It is not undue fear. We ask the Minister of Finance to actually undo fear and withdraw the bill.

Now, I won't necessarily thank the government for one of the consequences of the proposals under Bill 22 because it's probably a piece of their strategy to invoke this fear and cause the chaos that they are doing, hoping that this chaos under the Bill 22 proposal might hide some of the other nefarious things that are going on with other pieces of legislation. I mean, we have a number of pieces of legislation this week, six bills, I think, at least being introduced this week. Others to come. It's an inundation of legislation that the government hopes will cause, by volume, a smokescreen under which many things will pass and not much will be actually seen.

Though as we focus our attention on one thing after another in this House, each one seems to be a larger and larger controversy and some of them full-blown scandals. I speak of the firing of our Election Commissioner, which is, of course, part of this legislation as well. It is something that is unprecedented in most democracies, certainly in ours, where a government will actually fire the Election Commissioner who has ongoing investigations into the propriety of their own leadership election process. This act of very cynical ploys by the government is something that they hope the electorate will forget about, the same way that I'm sure they didn't expect the reaction of 29,000 and counting teachers to at least take the time to send an e-mail. Also, as I'm reading these e-mails, almost every one of them that have been sent to my office says, "Yes, indeed," when my constituency assistant has asked if they can be quoted and if we can use their names. They're not saying, "Oh, no, don't use my name." They're saying, "You're darn right." That's what they're saying. Almost without exception, when they're asked if they wish to be identified, they are not hesitant about it.

Unlike other events in Alberta history, where in past years you may have had somebody disagreeing with the government and a small opposition of three or four NDP members and maybe some other members of other parties would rail against it and people in their neighbourhoods and their constituencies would tread relatively softly, not wanting to stick their heads up too high and be counted for fear of being ostracized – that was the way things happened in Alberta when there was a relatively . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. My apologies both to you as well as to the Assembly. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung actually spoke to the amendment immediately following the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, so as such, he is unable to speak to the amendment twice. However, if we happen to get back to the main bill, as he has not yet spoken to it, he could do that if that was possible.

We will move to another speaker.

9:10

Mr. Jason Nixon: We move that we move to one-minute bells for the duration of the evening, including in Committee of the Whole.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a question has been put to the Assembly, a request, which would require unanimous consent, to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: I invite another hon. member for the Official Opposition to rise. The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to this. Actually, it's not my pleasure to speak to it because this is just wrong. To have an omnibus piece of legislation like this, in my opinion, it looks like legislation that a corrupt government would pass. It is a piece of legislation that is going to do an incredible amount of damage in terms of trust with our essential public-sector workers. It is going to do damage to the democracy of this place, the integrity of this place, and not one government member actually seems to care. That's incredible to me.

I'm going to speak to the pensions, and I would like to thank all of the people that are watching, all of the people that have taken time out of their evenings to come here and watch us because it's that important to them. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like any member on the government side thinks it's really important. They have not even sort of put out a little shred of, "Maybe I understand some of the concerns." They have not talked about, "Well, you know, maybe we could go back and speak to people." No. It's once again: "We know best. Opposition is fear and smear." It turns out we're not fear and smear. It turns out we know exactly what we're talking about, as do they.

So firing an independent officer, the Election Commissioner: that is something that corrupt governments do. They find ways to cover things up. They have all the power. They do things to cover things up. Let's look at Alberta here for a second. Let's look at some of the things that this commissioner has done, just some of the things he has found because he's really, really good at his job. Apparently, he's so good at his job that you want to shut him down.

So let's look at some of the administrative penalties. Some of them are quite recent. They're in November. Robyn Lore, contributor: penalty of $4,000. Again Robyn Lore: another $4,000. Oh, look, another one: $9,000. Agropyron Enterprises Ltd.: $8,000. That's just November 1st. Energize Alberta: fines of $6,300, $2,000, $2,500, $3,000, $500, $3,900. It just goes on and on.

Jeff Callaway, UCP – oh, that's the kamikaze guy. Sorry if I said his name and I wasn't supposed to. He colluded with a third party to circumvent contribution limits. Gee, I wonder why the government wants to shut him down. Jeff Callaway, another fine: $2,000 for taking money that he shouldn't have. Another one for Jeff Callaway, solicited or accepted a contribution: $3,000, again inappropriate. It just goes on and on and on.

If you type in Alberta Election Commissioner, it'll come up. You can have a look for yourself. See how long that list is. In just the short time that he's been doing this work, he's fined the UCP and their operatives – was it $211,000? But we're supposed to buy that you're just doing this to save money because, you know, it'll be like a million dollars in five years and you're so fiscally responsible. Oh, wait. You have a war room snitch line that is – what? – $120 million over four years. Mr. Speaker, do you think that anybody is buying this? They're not.

You can continue to talk about your great big mandate, and you're going to do all this stuff because Albertans sent you here to do it, but you are going to find out very quickly that you are responsible to the people of Alberta, and they're not happy. You will see that very soon. You might not see it right now, but you will see it very soon. You were sent to this place to enhance democracy, to protect it, to value it, to do everything that you can to ensure its integrity. You know what you don't do to ensure integrity of democracy? You don't fire someone who's investigating you. That looks an awful lot like corruption.

This bill is shameful. I could go on about all of the things that are wrong with this bill. It's so big. What you've done is that you've just shoved everything in there that you possibly can because, you know, you want us to pretend like we're trying to drink out of a firehose. There's just so much that it's difficult for us to actually inform Albertans of what you're trying to do. Isn't that the point? That is the point. That is exactly what you're doing.

I am so frustrated for all of our public-sector workers, for our teachers, for our nurses, for everybody that has worked so hard to actually have a degree of control over their future and over their pension. I for one am eternally grateful for all of their work. I will always be. You know what you do when you're grateful? You respect them. You include them. You speak to them. You consult them. You don't run over them. I think it's just shameful, what you've done.

I could talk a little bit about – you know, there are all kinds of things. You have dissolved groups that oversee really important programs, that I think are important, like Special Olympics, like the Steadward Centre at the university, that provides supports and physical activity for people with disabilities. There are so many things. It encourages and mentors indigenous coaching, women in sport.

There are so many things that you have shoved into this bill and then invoked closure. What is today, Wednesday? The Government House Leader stood up, Mr. Speaker, and tried to tell us: well, you've already had five hours of debate. Really? Something that is this important for all of these public-sector workers? This is their pension. This is their future. This is what they've worked for, and you are choosing to ignore them, to stuff earplugs in and not listen to them. You never even asked them. You know what? You don't know what's best for people. You do not. Like my colleague said, I have great respect for AIMCo, I actually do. But I have more respect for the people of Alberta. I have more respect for the teachers and the nurses. You do not show respect by ignoring them.

This piece of legislation is really something. You know, it literally – and I'm sure my colleagues have said this – changes or amends 31 statutes. It's an unprecedented affront to democracy, and the fact that the government chose to roll this out and then invoke closure is just – I don't know. I don't even have the words for it, actually. It's shocking to me. It's shocking.

You know, I used to have some American friends and American family, and I teased them a lot because sometimes they'll be talking about American politics and what's going on there and just the degree of corruption that has led to impeachment hearings, because there is a leader of a country that is alleged to have done some very, very serious things, so serious, in fact, that the entire country is talking about impeachment. I used to tease my friends and family quite a bit about just the corruption: "How did you get there? I mean, were there signals along the way? How is it that this is okay?" You know what? I look at what's happening right in front of us, and I'm stunned by it. It's like a really bad Netflix show. It's just an affront to democracy.

Yesterday, when our leader stood up – I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I understand that what you told us was that you were just following the rules of the House. But what she did, to me, was speak truth to power. What she did was say: "You know what? This can't be allowed to happen in this place." Too many people have fought for too long and too hard for democracy to be able to flourish in a place like this. That means not firing people that are investigating you. That means not hijacking people's pensions. That means not hiding changes in a bill that is so ridiculously huge that you just don't want people to see it. On top of that, you just stop debate because – why? – you don't feel like being here late, you're tired of listening to us, you're tired of the e-mails. Well, you know what? That's part of democracy.

9:20

Member Irwin: Teachers are tired. Nurses are tired.

Ms Renaud: I do believe the teachers and the nurses are very tired.

It's unfortunate that the government members just can't even be bothered to listen to any of this, so they stop debate. They've only given us a little bit of time, couldn't care less what we have to say. That sends a message. It sends a huge message. We should be working every single day in this place to earn the trust of Albertans, and earning the trust means being honest with them and including them.

You know, I talked a little bit earlier today about some of the things I was worried about in the area that I'm critic for, and that is Community and Social Services. One of the things that I was very concerned about, Mr. Speaker – and I'm using this as an example – is that one of the things I learned is that there was going to be a review of a very large ministry that had a lot of programs in it, from AISH to PDD to supports for children with disabilities, homelessness support, women's shelters. One of the things that I was very surprised to hear was that that review will be done internally. Well, when you do a review internally, you don't get the information that you need because the information that you need comes from Albertans, and it comes from the people that are involved in the decisions that you're making or who will be impacted by the decisions that you're making.

So is it a pattern? Kind of seems that way. We've had all kinds of changes, and nobody has been consulted. The people that matter have not been consulted. This has been driven by ideology, misinformation, in my opinion, and I believe that the goal of this is not to make Albertans stronger or to make Alberta stronger and united. This is about self-serving partisan politics. That's what I believe it is. You don't do something like this, you don't introduce a bill that is this enormous and then say that five hours of debate is enough. It's not enough. It will never be enough.

I know that my office is just flooded with e-mails – e-mails from nurses, e-mails from teachers, e-mails actually even from students, e-mails from family members, e-mails from community members who are concerned – and their message is very simple: they were not consulted, and they're angry. They have every right to be angry. I'm angry for them. I know that this caucus will continue to talk about it. You know, you all might forget about it in a little bit. We will remind you. This is a shameful piece of legislation, and if this is the example that you are setting for the next three years, it's going to be a long three years.

I just wanted to say a couple of other things. One of the things that has worried me, I guess, over the last few months is the comments that people make about public-sector workers. It has come from the front bench, Mr. Speaker, it has come from the backbench, it has come from social media. It's this disdain for public-sector workers that I just don't understand. I don't get it. They are the fabric of our communities. They're the foundation of our province. They're there when we need them most. They're there when we don't need them, they're there when we don't notice: they're always there. They educate our children. They help us raise our children. The disdain that comes from this government is really stunning to me. It is absolutely stunning. Of course, their choice not to consult on this really, really important move is just another example of the absolute disdain for our public-sector workers, that I don't understand, that I think is dangerous. It's so disrespectful. It's incredibly disrespectful. It's sad. It is really unfortunate.

I hope that our Premier – like it or not, the voters decided, so he's our Premier – chooses to stand up and explain himself, I really do. I hope that our Premier has the courage to look our public-sector workers in the eye and explain this, I really do.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford caught my eye first.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just listening to the Member for St. Albert speak about some very important aspects of this bill and her real, deep anger, I think, quite legitimate and thoughtful anger, about the nature of this bill and why it is being brought in. The thing that really struck me, amongst the many things, of course, was her comments about the respect toward public service workers, whether they happen to be working for a department in government or whether they happen to be teachers or whether they happen to be nurses, the lack of respect that is shown by this government and particularly in this bill. I think it really is telling that they keep saying: don't worry; nothing bad is happening here.

If they truly believe that, why would they not have heeded the word of the chair of the ATRF, who asked for an audit to demonstrate whether or not moving these monies from the ATRF to AIMCo would indeed be positive for the teachers? I think their actions speak much louder than their words. If they do respect teachers, why don't they go to the teachers and demonstrate that this is a positive thing to be doing and work together to make it happen? They know that they can't do that because they have no evidence that this will be positive in any way whatsoever, but once the money is under their control, they don't need to talk to the teachers at all. Now, I know that the Minister of Finance has said: oh, the board of the ATRF will be kept intact. If it's being kept intact, why are you taking the money away from them? It doesn't make any sense. It has no face validity.

I would like to hear the Member for St. Albert speak a bit more about this deep lack of respect that she was addressing. Thank you.

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

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, one of the things I wanted to mention earlier – I am angry about this, and I think a lot of Albertans are angry about this. Part of the anger, obviously, is the complete lack of respect – the complete lack of respect – for our teachers. But part of the anger comes from – I can't believe that you actually think that we're going to buy your excuses. That's the part that I just don't get. You stand up and say things like, "Oh, no; we're doing this to save you money" and then you look at us like we're supposed to believe you. It's a little bit shocking to me.

Let me give you an example of how ridiculous this is some days, right? One of the things that you told us, Mr. Speaker, that the government told us was that getting rid of, firing the Chief Electoral Officer will save the government a million dollars over five years, and that's, like, super important because you guys are all fiscally responsible. But just the other day, when speaking to another piece of legislation, another member who sits over there stood up to speak about the cost of accountability. I think he was talking about recall legislation. He said:

> Why would it be worth spending money in a by-election? Because it would be worth it. If that individual was not representative of their constituents, if they were not keeping their word, if they were not being truthful, if they were not following through with those promises, it definitely would be worth it.

Accountability and responsibility: those things are worth it, right? Okay; that's all kinds of strange.

Number one: do I think a million dollars is a lot of money? Yes I do. Do I think that a million dollars to invest in an independent officer to ensure free and fair elections so that each Albertan's vote is worth the same as the other, do I think that's a good investment? Oh, yes, I do. Absolutely I do. What do I think about recall legislation? Well, that's for another day.

9:30

I just wanted to give that example because it's just one example of the things that the government, Mr. Speaker, stands up and tries to sell us and tries to sell Albertans, and they actually think that we're buying it or that anybody is buying it. You're doing it to save money? Again, firing somebody who's investigating you, that's what corrupt governments do. Let's not be that. It's not too late. We can stop this. You can stop this right now. You can admit a mistake. You can stand up and say: you know, well, we're going to reconsider because not only does it look bad, it is bad.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I will often ask conservatives is: what are you trying to conserve? What exactly is it that you are attempting to conserve within our society? What we see before us in this bill is this government attempting to conserve entitlement, and what just behooves me is that there are members on that side of the House that are just completely oblivious to what this government is doing.

Am I angry? Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker. You know me to be a passionate man. When I get up in this House, I call a spade a spade, and I say it like it is because like our hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, I too like to speak truth to power.

Now, one of the things that conservatives love to say is that it's about freedom. It's about freedom and that they're protecting freedom, when honestly what they are talking about is freedom of capital, freedom of wealth, and the people who own that wealth and continuously use it in order to take advantage of others in our society. In fact, Conservative governments, no matter where they are within the world, actually preach less government because somehow they think that less government – and remember that government is supposed to be here to serve the people. Government is supposed to be here to serve the people of this province. Less government. As a result of that less government, it obviously means centralization of power, and that's exactly what this bill does in so many different ways, and so many of my hon. colleagues have already spoken to that, but I'm going to get into it.

Well, first, let me just take a step back because one of the hon. members on that side of the House just earlier got up and made reference to the Holodomor, for which we have an amazing amount of respect, and criticized the Holodomor and Stalin for the centralization of power.

An Hon. Member: Careful.

Member Loyola: No. I'm amazingly respectful, hon. member. You don't have to worry about me. What I'm talking about is the centralization of power.

It behooves me that members on the other side of the House are staying so incredibly quiet when this bill that we have before us right now, Mr. Speaker, is attempting to do exactly that with the teachers' pensions.

As was pointed out by so many of my hon. colleagues, teachers weren't even consulted. They weren't even consulted, and their pension plan actually outperformed AIMCo. So I have to ask the other members on the other side of the House: what is going on here? Why this move without any consultation with the people that this bill actually affects? Now, I understand, I get it. You think less government will be better. That's your political, partisan opinion. But when the rubber meets the road, Mr. Speaker, when the rubber meets the road, "Is that what is actually best for the teachers of this province?" is what we have to ask ourselves. Is bringing these monies, these monies that these individuals have worked so incredibly hard for throughout their entire lives, taking those monies and bringing them under the control of AIMCo, where they will have less of an opinion on how it will actually function.

Now, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has gotten up in this House and very eloquently danced around the fact that, "Oh, everything's going to stay the same," just like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford pointed out so many times. "Everything's going to stay the same." But it's not. It's not.

Now, in our society, Mr. Speaker, we should be striving to make our institutions more democratic, where citizens of this province actually have more of a say on the governance, not only of pension funds but, also, over all matters of government. We want more people involved in the democratic process than less people involved in the democratic process, and I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that you would agree with that. We strive so that our institutions can be more democratic, so, then, why do have before us yet another bill that makes them less democratic?

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I really wanted to point out – and it was something that was brought up by the Member for St. Albert, bless her – is the fact that Conservative – and it's not just this Conservative government – governments in the past always tried to pit public-sector workers against taxpayers, as if we're not all citizens of this great province. Now, you've got to ask yourself: why pit the public sector against the taxpayers? Why create that division? Why put that in there? It's because they're trying to convince taxpayers that less government is better, and, as a result, our institutions being less democratic is actually better, bringing more of the control inside the purview of government is better.

These public-sector workers, like the hon. Member for St. Albert said, are the ones that come into work every day. They're the people that are sitting up in this gallery right now that dedicate themselves to educating our children, to making sure that they have the best education that they can possibly have here in the province of Alberta, to make sure that our children are properly prepared for the future that's in front of them. They dedicate themselves day in, day out, and I'm sure that a lot of members in this House on both sides of the aisle remember that one teacher, that one teacher that influenced them so much, that inspired them so much to keep learning and wanting to seek more education and more knowledge.

9:40

Those are the kind of people that are sitting up in that gallery right now, Mr. Speaker, because not only are they passionate about standing up for the future and teaching our children and making sure that Alberta is prepared for the future so that we can move towards a more modern way of being and, dare I say it, a more democratic society but they're also here because they care about the pension and they want to have their say in how those monies are managed, just like anybody else would do, just like every individual that goes to their bank and deposits money in their RRSP. They can decide how that money – where it's going to be placed, whether it's going to be a mutual fund or whether it's a guaranteed investment certificate or whatever the case may be. These teachers want to be able to have the same kind of say, provide direction, and that is what's being taken away from them right now.

So let's not fall into the trap, hon. members. This isn't about pitting the public sector against the taxpayers. We shouldn't continue to bring before this House proposed legislation that would actually make our institutions less democratic. I'm asking the members on the other side of the House: please consider the words that are coming out of my mouth; don't just blindly vote for this piece of legislation because cabinet has asked you to.

We're all here to represent Albertans, whether they be teachers or other public-sector employees. We're not just here to represent those who want freedom for their wealth. Yes, they are a part of our society, and, yes, they provide an instrumental role in making sure that our economy functions, but they are not the only Albertans that deserve a voice inside of this House. We're here to represent all Albertans, and that's what I'm asking all the members of this House to do, Mr. Speaker, to please consider all Albertans and not just those that share their personal, partisan, ideological frame of mind. Let's be true to the democratic institution that we were elected to participate in.

I tell my constituents regularly that I may be a member of the Alberta NDP, and I was elected as an NDP member, but I represent all of my constituents. No matter what their political beliefs are, what their ideology is, they all have an opportunity to walk inside of my constituency office and sit down with me and express their opinions. That's what we should be doing while we're inside this House, not representing only one group of people, one self-interested group, but all Albertans.

So I'll end with the words that I started with: what exactly are you trying to conserve?

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Would anyone like to add a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to comment on the amendment? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Easier said than – anyways, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be here tonight and to just talk a little bit about Bill 22. I have had the opportunity to be able to listen to members opposite debate this issue.

The first thing I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, is that – I don't know if the members know – my father is a retired teacher. He taught all of his life. The reality is that I actually am a teacher as well. I taught for two years. Never made so little in all my life. This was a long time ago, and teachers get paid better now, which is great. We want to be able to pay our teachers well. But I remember when I finished my degree, Mr. Speaker, and I came back and I taught in Alberta for two years. I took home $1,960 a month, and there was no way for me to be able to provide for my family on that kind of a wage. So I looked at my father, what he was making. He had tenure, and he was making a little over $2,400. I realized that my father, for as long as I can remember, would teach during the year, and then in the summer he would have to make up for what he didn't make during the teaching year by going and doing construction, and I would help him on those construction jobs. The members opposite talk about how they have, you know, the only real-life experience when it comes to the public sector. I disagree. We have lots of experience on this side as well about what the public sector is dealing with.

But I want to unpack some of the information that the members opposite have used in this argument. Now, my father, when the media and the NDP blew this issue up – and they did blow it up. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie said that we should stop pitting the taxpayer against the public sector. I want to call that member out, Mr. Speaker, through you, and I want that member to know who has stoked the fire on this issue. It has been the NDP all the way. Along with their liberal media counterparts, they have stoked the fire. They have sent the information out through the ATA as well to the teachers, and this information has been false.

When my father and I talked about this, he was concerned. He said: "What's going on? I'm retired. I need to make sure that my pension is still going to be there." I said to him: "Dad, your pension is intact. In fact, what we are doing is that we are trying to make sure that your pension is sustainable for the long run." So what happened when the NDP and their close friends and allies the ATA sent out the information? They cherry-picked data points. This is specifically what the NDP do. They will present something in a certain way so that they can incite people against each other.

Now, when the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie says that we are the ones who are pitting the taxpayer against the public sector, I call him out on that when they are cherry-picking the data points. We've shown specifically that over a 10-year period AIMCo outperforms the ATRF. So, Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, why would we not move that amount, that $18 billion, over into AIMCo, which is already working with $115 billion. Now, it only makes sense that a fund that is investing $115 billion has more buying power in terms of its investment capabilities than a fund that is only investing $18 billion.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's interesting about this is that when we took a look at this and being able to move this together, the NDP forget to tell a bunch of information, which is that the ATRF was the outlier. It was the outlier for all the other public-sector pensions, which were under AIMCo. I get that the NDP are struggling with the decision that was made on April 16 – we still hear this from the NDP today – but the truth is that they lost the election. They lost the election. Albertans chose a different path because they recognized that Alberta was on the wrong path for four years under the NDP.

Look, I was in opposition, Mr. Speaker. You and I were in opposition together prior to us being able to win the election, so I get how tough it is to be on that side. I get how tough it is to be able to watch the government go forward with what they had said to the public. But you know what? They have to get over the fact that they lost the election, and when they talk about their strategy – oftentimes when I was on the opposition side, I'd hear them say constantly that we had done everything wrong for the past 44 years under Conservative governments. What is amazing about this is that if that's the case, why did the members even move here? Most of them moved here. So why did they move here? Because there were jobs and there were opportunities here.

9:50

This is the plan that this government has tried to be able to establish. This is about jobs and the economy, Mr. Speaker. This is about being able to consolidate the ATRF under a world-class investment fund. This is about being able to take the agencies, boards, and commissions and make sure that they're efficient. I appreciate this bill because this is certainly a red tape reduction measure, something that is very dear to my heart.

This is something that we campaigned on. We told Albertans that we would be getting rid of at least one-third – at least one-third – of the regulatory burden. Now, Mr. Speaker, if they are going to lose their minds over what we're doing in this session over one bill, I can't imagine how they're going to handle the fact that we're about to give this government a giant enema. We're going to make sure that this government gets rid of at least one-third of their regulatory burden. So if they're going to lose their head over this one bill, they need to pace themselves because we're just getting started.

Mr. Speaker, I was sad to hear the same rhetoric coming from the members opposite about our fight-back strategy. The reason why we have to do a fight-back strategy is because the members opposite drove $50 billion of investment out of this province with their antibusiness rhetoric, with their antibusiness policies, and their antibusiness legislation. What's interesting about it is that this ex-government – the only government that actually had only four years in the existence of Alberta – had the opportunity to be able to talk to business and say, "You know what; we really want you guys to be able to jump-start the economy and get Albertans back to work," because they saw that jobs were leaving. Then they piled regulation on regulation on regulation on top of them, and then they piled all sorts of taxes on top of them, and then they continued to disparage them at every opportunity that they had. Then they would ask them: "Well, why aren't you guys creating more jobs? Why aren't you expanding your businesses?"

If they are supposedly the champions of the public sector, do they not understand that there is a symbiotic relationship between the public sector and a strong, robust economy? Don't they understand that you cannot continue to live on a credit card and expect that to be sustainable? Don't they understand that the only way that we can have good-quality health care and education in this province is if we have a strong, robust economy? How are you going to get that strong, robust economy? You can't buy your way into a strong, robust economy. You need to make sure that the businesses, especially small businesses – Mr. Speaker, 2 out of every 3 new jobs come from small businesses. Red tape disproportionately affects small businesses. If we don't start addressing these issues, I don't know how the members opposite expect us to be able to get Albertans back to work.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are champions of Albertans. We are the champions of all Albertans, whether it's the private sector or the public sector. The public sector cannot have a sustainable system unless we have a robust, strong private sector as well. So it is our job to make sure that we get out of the way of those job creators and those innovators. If we don't get out of their way, then we will not have the tax base to be able to pay for the important work that our public sector is doing. We hold both as important. But the past government did not seem to understand that symbiotic relationship. Because of that, they were fired after four years, the only government in the province's history to be fired after four years. They did not get it. They didn't understand it. They still don't understand it today, and they're still upset about it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they say that we're not representing Albertans. They say that they have heard from all of their friends and close friends and allies. You know, certainly, when they stoke the fire of misinformation to the teachers, I can see how they would be upset. My father was upset until I talked to him about the fact that we are going to actually save the ATRF $41 million a year. Now, if we save the teachers $41 million a year, that money can be then put towards the pensions. Why would we not look for those kinds of efficiencies? The members opposite have got to understand that. They have got to understand that. But you know what? I get that they're in opposition, I get that they have to be able to try to inflame and to do their job as opposition, but what they're doing at the expense of teachers is deplorable. It's deplorable.

I've actually sat with many teachers in my riding – just so that members opposite know – and I've listened to their concerns that are basically just talking points of the NDP, and what I said to them was: "Listen, let me just at least give you the other side, and if you still feel that we are doing something that is not right, then I can take that back to the government. I can take that back to my colleagues." After explaining to them, Mr. Speaker, the other side of the equation, they said, "Well, why weren't we told that?" A good question. You know, we're supposed to have the NDP sending out correct information. We're supposed to have the ATA sending out correct information. We're supposed to have the media sending out an unbiased report. Unfortunately, we have not been able to see that. So what do we do? We have to go out and we have to talk to individuals one at a time and try to be able to go through the information that the NDP have been providing and let them know: "Look, this is the other side of the story. Please take a look at it. You're educators."

Mr. Speaker, I really do believe that there are going to be some teachers that are upset. Even if we tell them what we're trying to do, even if they see an extra $500 per teacher in their pockets each year into their pension funds, I think they would still be upset. They'd still be upset. [interjections] And here we're getting heckled

by the members opposite, that supposedly know all the numbers. According to what we heard from these members opposite before the budget came out about how many hospitals we were going to blow up, how many teachers we were going to fire – all this stuff has not come to fruition. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, they're continually heckling. The members opposite know that there's 29(2)(a) for them to be able to speak about the issues, but they can't wait. They just have to heckle. It's fear and smear, and it's the anger machine that we constantly see from the NDP. Albertans rejected that in the last election because they recognized that you can only cry wolf so many times until people stop believing you. I saw that in the election. There was so much fear and smear coming from the NDP in the last election that people got sick and tired of it. They finally said: "No. It cannot be true. The last 800 times you've said that the sky is falling, it hasn't happened, and therefore we don't believe you." And that's why they lost. They lost because Albertans don't believe them anymore.

Now, I don't know why they continue to go down this path that they're going down. It has not worked for them. But you know what? Look, if that's what they want to do, fantastic. Keep going at it. They can lose the next election as well. But you know what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker? We're going to keep to our campaign promises. We made 375 campaign promises to Albertans, and we're going fulfill every one of them. Why? Because we actually care about Albertans. We want to get them back to work. We want to make sure that Albertans get back to work. This is a full-time job for us. They messed it up so badly on the other side for the last four years that it's very difficult to be able to accomplish this. We will make sure that Albertans get back to work.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has the longest look on his face.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there was a lot to break down in the words that were just spoken by that member, many things that I'm concerned about. Of course, we have quite a difference in ideology from this side of the House to that side of the House, as we're seeing here, as we see every day.

One of my main concerns is the fact that the member continues to go on at length about, "We can't afford to pay teachers, we can't afford to increase AISH payments for people who are living in poverty, we can't afford to index seniors' benefits or cover dependants of seniors who are low-income Albertans unless the economy is firing on all cylinders," as has been said in this House by government members. That's something that we've heard from this government day in and day out, and that's very concerning to me, Mr. Speaker, because I don't believe, personally, that we should be saying, "You have to wait until we bring in X amount of dollars until we can actually help lift you out of poverty," but that is what this government says each and every day, and that is what they're saying in this legislation as well.

10:00

The member also said that there were 375 campaign platform commitments that they're planning to get through. Well, I looked through their platform. I didn't see this in there, so that's very concerning to me. Once again, they do not have a mandate to pass this legislation.

The member also went on about the fact that even if they did come clean about how this legislation actually works, the teachers and the nurses, well, they still might not support it. Well, maybe you should have had that conversation before you brought Bill 22 forward. That might have been a good place to start.

Now, another point that the minister made was that we are pulling the cloth over the eyes of Albertans, that teachers and nurses and other public-sector workers that are affected by this – essentially, what the member is saying is that these members of our public sector, people who are incredibly intelligent, who are some of the highest educated people in our province, can't take the time to learn about what this legislation does. I imagine the 50 or so teachers and nurses and other public-sector workers who are in this gallery right now know exactly what is happening in this legislation, and it's not because of press releases that we've made or conversations that we've had through social media or, as the member states, that the "liberal media" has brought forward. I imagine that in the limited amount of time that they've had, unfortunately, because of the speed at which this government is trying to move through this legislation, they have looked at what is in this legislation, and they're very concerned. That's what they're trying to take to this member. Unfortunately, they are not listening, and that's very concerning to me.

How are the members that are sitting in the gallery today, the members of the public sector who are going to be affected by Bill 22 and the attacks on their pensions, how are they supposed to trust this government when just this week the minister of agriculture said that the federal government needs to impose antiworker back-to-work legislation against the Teamsters, the railway workers that are trying to fight for safer conditions in their workplace? To have a minister of this House try and call on the federal government to impose something that is protected by Supreme Court rulings is absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

How are the members of the public sector supposed to trust that this government has their best interests when on other files we've seen – once again, with Bill 9 the government was in negotiations with public-sector workers: "Well, we'll just push those back a couple of months, and we'll see how things go. Oh, well, now the MacKinnon report has come back, and we think you should actually take a 5 per cent rollback." That is not respectful to our public-sector workers, and that is exactly why those same workers do not trust that this government has their best interests at heart. And, really, who could blame them? Who could blame them?

The fact is that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the Finance minister and every other person on the government side who has stood up today have not addressed our concerns, concerns about: "Why are we doing this in the first place without consultation? And if there is a real reason for this to move forward, why haven't you shared it with the public? Why haven't you shared it with this House? Why haven't you tabled the documents showing that AIMCo can actually get a better return?" If that conversation happened before you brought forward this legislation, then maybe this wouldn't be happening.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Government Motion 35 after one hour of debate all questions that remain for second reading need to be put. As such, we are on amendment RA1.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:04 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen

Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Barnes	Madu	Sawhney
Dreeshen	McIver	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
Long	Rosin	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 29

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Bill 22 for second reading, as moved by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:09 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Barnes	Madu	Sawhney
Dreeshen	McIver	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
Long	Rosin	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		

Totals:	For – 29	Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a second time]

Bill 24
Appropriation Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Dach]

The Speaker: Hon. members, in accordance with Standing Order 64(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill for second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:13 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Luan	Rutherford
Amery	Madu	Sawhney
Barnes	McIver	Schulz
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Pitt	Toews
Horner	Rehn	Toor
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Long	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 22
Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to see progress as we proceed through the evening.

With that, I do have an amendment that I would like to move. I have the appropriate number of copies for the pages and will await your instructions.

The Chair: Hon. Government House Leader, this will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm moving the following amendment to Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. The bill is amended as follows: (a), section 13(11) is amended by striking out the proposed section 153.093(2)(f) and substituting the following:

> (f) The responsibility for 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 is transferred to the person who holds the position of Election Commissioner, who may continue the investigation.

And (b), section 24 is amended by striking out "Sections 14 to 17" and substituting "Sections 20 to 23."

10:20

There are two sections to this amendment. I will speak to the second first, Madam Chair, if that works for you, that being (b) in regard to the language around section 24. That is a simple amendment that was caught by drafters in government legal counsel as they proceeded through with this legislation. It is a minor modification. I don't anticipate any concerns with that. Drafters, as you know, do excellent work when they're putting together legislation, but it is very complicated and dry, and sometimes they catch one of these on the way.

In regard to section (a) it doesn't change anything within the current bill that is coming to Committee of the Whole in regard to investigations, as has been stated by the government along the way through the discussion in regard to Bill 22, Madam Chair. Investigations will continue. The Election Commissioner's office, if Bill 22 passes this Chamber, will move under the Chief Electoral Officer. That position will remain, and any investigations that are taking place can continue through that process. Processes have existed in this province for over a century, as you know. But the one change that we'd like to make and why I'm moving this amendment is to make sure that it's clear so that everyone understands that, particularly given the ongoing fearmongering from the Official Opposition, making the change to make it crystal clear what the legislation always did say; that is, that investigations will pass on to the Election Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer, going forward, with this legislation.

I think that's important to clarify in a clear way for Albertans along the way, Madam Chair, and also to reinforce the fact that we will be moving, if Bill 22 passes this Chamber, to the same system that exists in the province of Manitoba and the federal government, which are the only two jurisdictions in our country that have an Election Commissioner. Every other province does not have an Election Commissioner. They just have a Chief Electoral Officer, the point being that we will run this under one organization going forward, as it had been in our province prior to 2018 and had been for over a century in this province.

Interestingly enough, Madam Chair, is actually the way the current Election Commissioner has recommended to other governments in the past, including the Northwest Territories, with their white paper in I believe 2006 – I may be off on the date but within that range – making it clear that it makes the most sense, when you're managing election systems, both from the investigative perspective but as well as managing elections, that you do that from one agency. I think that's important. That's what this legislation does. I do hope that all members of the Chamber will support this minor amendment to make it clear that investigations will be continuing and protected under this legislation.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for this amendment. I have just a question for him. I agree that section 13(11)(f) – the language here is slightly different, but it still says "may continue the investigation." In your remarks you said very clearly "will" and that this was for certainty that the investigations that may have been started will continue, yet the word "may" is still there. If you could please explain that.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, a few of my colleagues may have some other comments, particularly those that are lawyers in the Chamber. I do see the hon. the Municipal Affairs minister is itching, it looks like, to get up in Committee of the Whole this evening, and I'm looking forward to hearing his comments from a legal perspective. As you know, I'm proud not to be a lawyer. I do advertise that quite often in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

But there are two different issues that I think the hon. member is confusing. The transfer of investigations: it's clear within this amendment. It was clear within the legislation prior to this anyway, but this does make the language more clear for people when they're reading the legislation that it will transfer. The hon. member seems to be indicating that the Legislature would then indicate to an independent officer of the Legislature what investigations they will continue with or how they will proceed with investigations. That would be wrong, in our opinion. It is not the place of this House or any member of this Assembly to indicate to an independent officer of the Legislature what investigations they go forward with. We don't have that information, and in addition to that, it is important that they remain independent from political interference and continue to do their work. To do what the hon. member seems to be suggesting would actually, Madam Chair, I submit to her through you, be getting into a level of political interference, something that the government is not prepared to do.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Government House Leader noted, I am one of the few lawyers in this House – I am one of the few lawyers in the House, hon. members – so I just want to provide a very narrow comment on the question that is asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods on the use of "may," "shall," "will," or "must" . . .

An Hon. Member: And "can."

Mr. Madu: . . . and "can." You know, let's bear in mind that the purpose of this amendment, as the House leader rightly said, is to make sure that there isn't any political interference. One of the difficulties between us, members on this side and members opposite, is always this game of philosophical differences and fight when it comes to a matter that is common sense or that is of substance in nature. There are numerous occasions in which the courts have had to interpret the word "may" to "shall." But what they want us to do with respect to this particular bill is to tie the hands of the Election Commissioner to act in a certain way, which I think would be highly inappropriate. The whole essence is to make sure that that particular officer is independent, uses his own judgment and powers and discretion as has been given to him under the law without the NDP telling that particular member how to do their work.

Legally speaking, again, this is a typical example of how members opposite have inflamed the debate and discussion around this particular issue. My hope is that at some point, you know, they would put aside their extreme ideological partisanship and focus on the issues before them. Courts have interpreted – there are several instances in which the courts have held how to interpret the words "may," "shall," and if it becomes an issue for that particular officer, I am confident that that officer will deal with it because under the proposed legislation he would have the authority to deal with that particular issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I, too, am very proud not to be a lawyer in this Legislature, but I also want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for his comments because he's correct. You know, I was just talking to my friend from Leduc-

Beaumont, who was also a police officer, and one of the things as a former investigator, both him and myself, is that we have the officer discretion. When a complaint comes in, it's not something that we shall do; this is something that we may do, and we use that officer discretion to either continue on with the investigation or not continue on with the investigation. I do agree with my learned friend the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West that you do not want to tie the hands of an investigator, and you must allow them to have that discretion.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I thank the House leader for this amendment. I think it is an amendment that provides a lot of clarity for this bill. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my privilege to rise and speak to this amendment. Now, I may not be a lawyer, but I think there's a difference between "may" and "shall." You know, we could just use an example, say, of the Bible. There are the 10 commandments. I don't think they said: thou may not kill. Like, you may, you may not, maybe. It's pretty clear in the context of the Bible: "thou shalt not." Now, there is a difference between "may" and "shall." This does not ensure that the investigation will continue.

10:30

But you know what, Madam Chair? This amendment is irrelevant to the extent that what this bill does is fire the very person who is in the middle of an investigation. That doesn't erase the fact that nowhere in Canada have we ever seen this type of legislation. The Leader of the Official Opposition framed it really well when she said: this is equivalent to if the Prime Minister fired the lead investigator into the SNC-Lavalin case in the middle of the investigation. It's an unprecedented move to eliminate the very position of the person who has open investigations. I mean, this is a very, very serious matter. In fact, that's exactly why the Leader of the Official Opposition refused to apologize and is not in the House at the current moment. This is an unprecedented attack on democracy.

Now, what's astounding – I mean, so far tonight we've talked mostly about the changes to the teachers' pension. If the argument is simply that it's going to save money, then I really don't understand why the government couldn't bother to talk to the teachers. I find it also offensive and reflects a naive understanding of how the ATA works and that somehow either teachers are all New Democrats or – I'm not sure what.

Mr. Jason Nixon: No, they're not.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much. They're not.

Anyone who says "teachers are all" and put them into a political party box is incorrect. But I can tell you that teachers are upset, most teachers. I don't care what political party they belong to, which way they voted. They're upset because this government is without notice, without consultation, without conversation – the very people who claim that big government is bad. Guess what you're being? Big Brother. You're taking their pension and saying: "We know better. We know where your pension should be. We're going to give it to AIMCo to manage." Now, again, as I've said before, I have the utmost respect for AIMCo. I know that they have delivered good results, but if the teachers – well, first of all, the teachers should have been asked and should be given a choice, not forced through legislation. It speaks volumes, quite frankly, to how the government views consultation and actually having conversations with people. I mean, that's one of the issues that I have with this current omnibus bill.

I mean, the other thing is that this government has three massive omnibus bills that are before this House right now. Now, Madam Chair, you'll remember in the last four years the number of times members of the former caucus of the Wildrose would stand up and say: how can we debate a piece of legislation this thick when it's only been tabled a day or two ago? I heard it over and over again in the last four years. I know that there are members who remember saying it and who have heard it. I know the Government House Leader may have made comments like that once or twice or maybe more than that.

The point is, Madam Chair, that this legislation was introduced less than 48 hours ago. We've moved into Committee of the Whole. We've gone through second reading. We didn't spend as much time as we would've liked, and now we're in committee. We know that the government intends to, should the House all vote in favour of passage, move this bill through before the end of the week. Now, if that does happen, that's unprecedented. In Alberta a piece of legislation like this has not been introduced and passed through all readings in the same week, let alone a piece of legislation that fires the person who has open, active investigations, and that person now will be terminated. Now, I mean, nobody believes the government when they say: well, he could be hired back. Okay. I guess in theory, sure. I doubt that's going to happen.

The other thing is why do we need this piece of legislation to be passed at breakneck speed, Madam Chair? What is the government afraid of? What does the commissioner know that they don't want to come to the surface? We know that he was scheduled to come in front of Public Accounts next week. Again, you know what? Maybe it's not either of those two reasons. I would love for the government to rise and say, "The reason we need to move this at breakneck speed is because of X," and then we can have a robust discussion about that.

Madam Chair, this piece of legislation makes changes to teachers' pensions without the very people being consulted. Again, you know, coming from a government that claims they like small government: well, clearly, you don't. Your actions are the opposite.

Again, with actions for removing the office of the person who's had over 800 complaints when it comes to the election and election irregularities – now, I would hope that everyone in this House stands for democracy and transparency and wants to ensure that Albertans have a voice and a mechanism, if there are concerns about the election, of how they can be resolved. Quite frankly, the reason that this position was created is because those complaints weren't adequately being resolved or explored, and we heard that from Albertans. To say that it's now rolled into one position, that it's the same thing: it's not the same thing, Madam Chair.

Albertans are concerned. I mean, we've had letters pouring in, not just from teachers. I believe on the teacher file that over 29,000 letters have come in. I know for a fact that every single member in this House has letters coming into the constituency office, and if you stand up and say that you don't, I know that is incorrect. I know that there are letters coming in. They aren't chain letters, Madam Chair; they're from teachers that are writing letters individually and sending them in, expressing their shock that this government would, without their permission, without their input, without any of their questions, make massive changes to their pensions, changing the joint governance, lowering the number of representatives that sit on the pension board. Again, the Finance minister can talk about: we're not changing joint governance. Well, you're changing the number of people in joint governance. So okay. There will be a representative but not the same number that existed before this bill came in.

There's a reason, Madam Chair, that until recently we had about 50 people in the gallery watching the discussion – that's just here – let alone the thousands of people that are watching this debate throughout the province. Teachers, quite frankly, are shocked. This government did not campaign on making sweeping changes to their pensions without talking to them about it first. Like, who do you think you are? To stand up and say: we won with a – well, you didn't win an autocracy. You didn't win every single vote in this province. You didn't win every single vote in your own riding. Nobody did. So to say that you somehow have carte blanche to do whatever you want – I don't know when Alberta turned from a democratic province to whatever this government thinks it is now, where they answer to no one.

Madam Chair, for the purposes of this amendment I appreciate what the Government House Leader is saying it will do. You know what? Even if I give him the benefit of the doubt – I know he can be a good guy – it doesn't change the fact and the reason that I cannot support this bill. It cannot be improved through an amendment. In fact, we could put up 5,000 amendments, and it still would not fix this bill. This bill needs to be torn up, and the government needs to go and talk to the teachers, find out what they want to do with their money. If the teachers say, "Yes, you know what? We're happy to move from the ATRF to AIMCo," then okay. I wouldn't stand up here and have a problem. If the teachers voted on what they wanted to do with their pension and they voted, "We want to move it," that's their democratic right. I would support that. But to stand and say it's going to save money, yet the board – and I'd appreciate if the Finance minister will clarify this because from his previous comments he had said that the ATRF board will still have oversight or still be involved as far as how the funds are being invested. Then where's that cost savings? The board is doing their exact same work, only now they actually don't have the authority to direct how the money is being invested.

10:40

The other thing is – and maybe the government would have a little bit of a rationale or a leg to stand on if the ATRF was really poorly performing and AIMCo's return on investment was much higher. Even then I would say that you still need to ask the teachers. It's their money. But the ATRF is performing better than AIMCo. The teachers didn't ask for this. The teachers haven't been consulted. Now, whether the government wants to go through the ATA or talk to teachers directly, that's fine. But I will remind all members that the ATA is a professional organization, so it is extremely disrespectful for any member to talk poorly about the ATA. I can tell you that they will not be very happy when they hear the comments that were made by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. But they weren't consulted. No teacher was. Or if they were – you know what? If I'm wrong, then I'm happy for the Finance minister to stand up and say: here's a list of all of the teachers we've reached out to, maybe not individually by name, but these are the schools that we talked to to get input on whether or not we should move their pension funds.

In addition to my concerns about the pension changes, in summary, Madam Chair, this amendment is irrelevant to the extent that it doesn't change the fact that the very position that is undergoing active investigations is being fired. For that reason I will not be supporting this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and talk about some of the things that the Official Opposition House Leader had to say and correct some of the record. First of all, I would not accuse the Official Opposition House Leader in any way of deliberately misrepresenting facts or misleading this Chamber because I don't think that was his intention. With that said, though, he spent a significant amount of time . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order: 23(h), (i), and (j). The Speaker has ruled over and over again that you cannot do or say – you cannot backdoor a comment. What you would say – you can't impose it. I'm not thinking of the right words. You can't impute a motive of what you would say . . .

An Hon. Member: Indirectly.

Mr. Bilous: . . . indirectly what you can say directly. Thank you for that help. This was a team effort on this point of order. I appreciate that.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Rising on the point of order, I in no way was backdooring a comment. In fact, I was very, very clear that I don't think that at any point the Official Opposition House Leader would attempt to mislead the House. Unless he thinks me saying that he would not mislead the House is in some way saying that he would mislead the House, I don't even follow the logic. But you know what? Madam Chair, I'm feeling very charitable this evening, so I'll be happy to withdraw the comments that the Official Opposition House Leader would not mislead the House. I don't know what he's trying to say, but I'll let the people at home figure that out.

Back to the comments in regard to Public Accounts. This is the problem, Madam Chair, with this legislation and the NDP's approach to most of their files but particularly in the last few days in this legislation. The NDP continue to misrepresent facts whether deliberately or by accident, I think probably a combination of both. In this case I'll give the Official Opposition House Leader the benefit of the doubt. He's new to the Official Opposition side although this is his second time on that side of the House. I don't know if he has forgotten the difference between standing committees, but he continues to say that the Election Commissioner was coming next week to the Public Accounts Committee. That is not factual. The Election Commissioner was not scheduled to attend the Public Accounts committee next week. That's not factual. That's the problem with the NDP's approach to this. They continue to say things that are not factual. How do they expect Albertans to believe them when they continue to do that?

An example yesterday: they continued to tell the media and everybody that they could that there was time allocation already moved on Bill 22 – not factual – and that they were only going to get three hours to debate Bill 22. Not factual. In fact, I was on my way in to question period today when I was speaking with the media. It was interesting to be able to have that conversation about the fact that the day before, the NDP told the media that they were only going to have three hours to be able to debate the bill, and the night before, we had already debated this bill for over four hours and were well on our way to much past four hours and will continue for a period of time significantly longer than that. So again not factual. Well, how can Albertans believe a party that at the very least gets it wrong so much?

Now, the Election Commissioner was scheduled, like all independent officers of the Legislature, to come to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. I don't know if the hon. member has the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices or if he ever has. I do know that I have had the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for several years, Madam Chair, and I can inform you that the Election Commissioner and the Chief Electoral

Officer and the Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General and the Ombudsman and the Privacy Commissioner and the Child and Youth Advocate and on and on: those independent officers of the Legislature do report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to talk about their budget. That is what was scheduled for next week, Madam Chair, when it came to the Election Commissioner, to discuss his budget, not to discuss investigations of any kind. In fact, that would not happen. In no way would the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices try to politically interfere in any sort of investigations, and I don't think any member on that committee from any party would try to politically interfere in an investigation. So why all of a sudden do the NDP want to give the impression that the Election Commissioner would go to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to talk about some sort of investigation?

Madam Chair, you know. I think, in fact, if I recall, you were a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for a while, maybe you still are. I don't know. You know what the process is. It just becomes kind of ridiculous when the NDP misrepresent facts so much to Albertans. How do I now as a member of this place who is trying to listen to their ideas when it comes to this legislation at this point, in Committee of the Whole – hopefully, the hon. members bring forward some amendments that may or may not benefit this legislation from the government's perspective. I hope they do bring forward some that will benefit it. If it happens, I'm sure the hon. the Minister of Finance will be happy to pass those amendments to be able to make his legislation better. But how could he even trust the Official Opposition now, when they misrepresent so many facts just on one piece of legislation over the last couple of days? How can any Albertan who is paying any level of attention trust the NDP? Now, I guess, Madam Chair, that's why the NDP are the only one-term government in the history of the province and they were fired in April. But I digress.

Some of the other concerns that the hon. Opposition House Leader has raised I found quite offensive, frankly, Madam Chair, in regard to the CEO of Elections Alberta, an organization that has overseen elections in this province for over a century. For over a century it has overseen the elections in this province. I have met the current CEO of Elections Alberta several times, particularly in my capacity as a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, and know that my experience with him – in fact, I sat on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, that was put together by the hon. Opposition House Leader's current leader when she was the Premier of Alberta. The current CEO of Elections Alberta sat on that committee with us for several months, doing important work as we went through the process of revising election laws inside the province of Alberta. My experience with him is that he has always acted in a nonpartisan way. He has been very, very competent in his capacity as the CEO of Elections Alberta and certainly has shown no reason for anybody not to trust him or for any member of this House to indicate that they don't trust the CEO of Elections Alberta or Elections Alberta to do the important work that they've done in this province for a century.

I will point out to you that the current CEO of Elections Alberta was reappointed by an NDP government when the NDP government had control of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and could have appointed anybody that they liked. So, clearly, it appears that they trusted Glen Resler to do that job. But then I just watched the Official Opposition House Leader rise and say that there were not adequate investigations going on, that issues were not being resolved when it came to our election system, Madam Chair. That's a direct attack, from my perspective, on an independent officer of this Legislature, to even imply that the CEO of Elections Alberta and Elections Alberta were in some way not doing their job when they had that capacity.

10:50

I'd say that at the very least maybe it's indicating that the NDP, who are now the Official Opposition, when they were in government seemed to have some sort of a problem with the Chief Electoral Officer. I don't know why they reappointed him, then, if that was the case, but to stand in this House and say that about an independent office of this Legislature, Madam Chair, I would submit to you is offensive and, quite frankly, shameful, and the hon. member should apologize to the Chief Electoral Officer.

I do note that the Official Opposition House Leader again glosses over a couple of very important facts. The first is that not one province – I don't know if every hon. member knows this – in this country has an independent Chief Electoral Officer and an independent Election Commissioner, not one province except for Alberta, who just got that recently, in 2018, after the then NDP government forced it through under time allocation. Then Government House Leader Brian Mason forced it through under time allocation and brought in a separate office, making us different from any other jurisdiction in the country. At the time the legacy parties that make up the current government – actually, no. We were already merged, Madam Chair. The current party that makes up the government in the province of Alberta had lots of protests about that idea because the structure was wrong.

You know, Madam Chair, who made it so clear that the structure was wrong? The current Election Commissioner. The current Election Commissioner that the hon. members are referring to has written advice to other provincial and territorial governments, including the Northwest Territories, advising them how to structure offices around elections. I used the quote in question period the other day, as the hon. members may remember. It makes it clear that it makes no sense to separate the management and the investigation of our elections, and it makes sense to keep them in one capacity. Now, there are two jurisdictions in this country, and soon to be three if Bill 22 is passed into law in the coming days, that have an Election Commissioner and a CEO of Elections Alberta or Elections Canada, but they are in the same office. The Election Commissioner works for the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Manitoba, Elections Canada, and, if Bill 22 passes, Elections Alberta.

Now, the other thing that the Official Opposition House Leader said – and I think this just proves the point that the NDP will just say anything. You'd think that after all these years I would have already figured that out, but sometimes it just quite shocks me. When you see the Official Opposition House Leader get up and say with a straight face that this bill will get rid of the office – he said it, Madam Chair – of the Election Commissioner, that hon. member must know if he read the bill that that is not factual. Or he didn't read the bill, and I don't know why he would comment on it and say some sort of office had been replaced inside that legislation if that is not the fact. The Election Commissioner's office remains in place. The staff that are within the Election Commissioner's office remain in place.

The idea that all of a sudden when the Election Commissioner's office and the process of investigations is brought back into the same system that used it for a hundred years that somehow information or serious investigations that may or may not be happening would automatically just puff and disappear is ridiculous, first of all, but, second of all, just a complete and utter attack on the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta. Madam Chair, that is what the Official Opposition is saying when they say that.

The people that will come and take over those files and those investigations and any of the information that may be in the Election Commissioner's office are not me. It's not the Premier of Alberta. It's not any member of this cabinet. It's not any member of this Legislature on either side of the aisles. It's not the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. Do you know who it is, Madam Chair? It is the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta, an independent officer of this Legislature who has served this province for a very long time, served it with integrity, and has never, as far as I know, been accused of any wrongdoing that I am aware of – certainly, if he was, I don't know why the NDP would have reappointed him – and has brought forward several elections without any complaint, including the last election and an election before that, where the then Jim Prentice PC government called a snap election a year before an election was supposed to be called. I know that I ran in that election, and I don't recall any significant problems. There are always problems in an election because it's pretty complicated to run an election across a province the size of this province, but no major problems. He was able to bring in the 29th and 30th Legislature, in my experience, with no problem.

Now he – wherever he is, if he's watching this – has to get up and watch the Official Opposition House Leader, the Leader of the Opposition's right hand inside this Chamber, and watch him say with a straight face that somehow, Madam Chair, the Chief Electoral Officer is going to make investigations disappear. It's appalling. To repeatedly say that inside this place is just offensive.

If there is some reason that that member knows of that the Chief Electoral Officer would do that, it's certainly his responsibility as a member of the Legislature to go to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. But it seems to me that he has indicated that he's not a member, but as you know, Madam Chair, any member of this Legislature can attend a standing committee meeting at any time. He should inform the chair that there's a reason that the Chief Electoral Officer cannot be trusted with investigations, because I'm certain the Chamber needs to know that.

But you know what, Madam Chair? I suspect he won't go out of this Chamber and say that about the Chief Electoral Officer. He won't go out and say that about Elections Alberta anywhere but in this Chamber where he enjoys parliamentary immunity. If he truly believes that the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta are so corrupt – and they're not – that they would somehow make investigations disappear, he should march out and he should tell that to the TV cameras. If he really thinks that about Glen Resler, the independent officer of this Legislature in charge of our elections, he should leave this room where he has parliamentary immunity and go and tell those TV cameras what he just did there. You know what? He won't do it. He won't do it because it's not true.

The CEO of Elections Alberta has operated with integrity in the entire time that I have had the privilege of serving inside this Chamber. He deserves better than that from the Official Opposition, Madam Chair. Again, watching the NDP approach legislation like this just shows you again why Albertans fired them. It just shows you again why they probably will never return to government in our lifetime, and, as I predict, if this is how they're going to approach Official Opposition, they'll be the third party and then eventually not even a party inside this Chamber.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I just wanted to add my voice as the Member of the Legislature for Edmonton-South West to the ongoing debate on Bill 22.

You know, Madam Chair, I have listened to the contributions coming from the members opposite on key issues contained in Bill 22. Number one, the office of the Election Commissioner and the teachers' pension – let me say this about the Election Commissioner. I listened to the Member for St. Albert in her remarks say that the Election Commissioner has fined the UCP and their operatives. Again, this goes to show the level of misinformation designed to cause fear and anxiety out there. Let's be clear. The Election Commissioner has not fined the United Conservative Party, and as I've always said . . .

Ms Renaud: Just your operatives.

Mr. Madu: I'm sure that *Hansard* would confirm that you said "the UCP and their operatives."

That was the language expressly used by the Member for St. Albert, and that goes to show some of the difficulties that I, quite frankly, have had with members opposite. In my very few remarks before this House I have appealed to them to focus on facts and the substance before this particular House and not political theatre, looking into these cameras in this Chamber. Again, to be clear, the Election Commissioner has not fined the UCP as a political party.

But coming to the substance of the bill before this particular House, you know, what we have had – Madam Chair, speaking through you to everybody out there, and there are citizens listening across this particular province – from the NDP is to say that we have, by this particular bill, fired the office of the Election Commissioner and that it is designed to gut the investigations against the UCP and their members.

11:00

Madam Chair, I just wanted to read into the record that section 153.093(2) of the bill reads:

> 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.

I've already addressed the legal meaning of may, shall, can, and will and how the courts of this land, including the highest court of this country, have looked at the interpretation and the application of those words. But no. The NDP would – [interjection] I can see why the Member for Edmonton-Decore would heckle because any time you speak the facts, it rattles them so bad because that is not what they're interested in. To anyone listening out there, that really is contained in this particular bill.

I will also go further to read into the record subsection (f), which 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.

What we have been hearing in the media and online coming from the NDP and their allies is that this is designed to end the ongoing investigation by the Election Commissioner. To the contrary, and let me be clear to all those watching and listening tonight: all of those functions are preserved by the bill that is being debated before this particular House. Their fundamental problem, which is, again, a philosophical difference between those of us over here and the members opposite, is what they have always done. Prior to the introduction of the Election Commissioner, that office was never in existence for the more than 100 years that this province has had to manage elections. [interjection]

Again, Member for St. Albert, there is another point, remember, between those of us over here and the members opposite. Whilst we will stay quiet and allow them to speak – we will give them all the time they require to speak – they would never allow those of us over here to say what we want to say. Under the Westminster parliamentary system, when we allow you to speak and hear all that you have to say, it is common decency and courtesy that you would give the same to us. As a newly elected member of this House I am still hopefully looking forward to the day when that will be the case.

Again, there isn't anything that we have done other than to say to the NDP that we've had a system that has served us so well for more than 100 years and that we have never had any problem with. It has worked so well. We have a Chief Electoral Officer whose record is impeccable, an independent officer of this House who has had the honour of performing the particular jobs and responsibilities for a while, until the NDP said: "Hell, no. We must infuse our political ideology and division into our politics." That's exactly what this is all about, and they would want our citizens across this province to believe that this is anything other than their pursuit of their ideological purity. No, Madam Chair, I don't think that was what the people of this province voted for us to do.

You will recall that in the period leading up to the election, there was fear and smear and divisive and identity politics to the point where even their allies, the NDP and their allies, called my very self a white supremacist. You can go online and fact-check this. I still have the e-mail asking me to apologize for being a white supremacist. Many of them took to Twitter and Facebook echoing the sentiment. Again, why would they not sit down and pay attention to the facts? No. They are prepared to ignore the facts in pursuit of their ideological intention, which has always been to create fear amongst our citizens.

Madam Chair, I do not think that is what the people of this province voted for. I do not want to dwell too much on the Election Commissioner issue but simply to conclude on that particular point that if they think that returning this province to the system that virtually every single province, including the federal government, operates under – if they think that is bad, then in the next election they will have the opportunity to take that before the people of our province. With that, it is astonishing the level of fear that I have had to sit in this Chamber and see emanate from the members opposite.

I will now turn my attention to, again, one of their fear and smear – and I'm glad that some of our teachers are in the gallery tonight. Let me say to them that I have enormous respect for all of you, for all of our teachers. I have always said in public that I do not think that I would be standing before this people's Chamber if it were not for the men and women like our teachers. Many of you here know where I come from and my history. Education is something that I do not toy with. If it were not for education, I do not think that I would be here speaking to this particular bill. I want our teachers to know that there is nothing that we have proposed, in giving AIMCo the responsibility to manage the investment portion of your pension, that is an attempt to gut or destroy or, in the language of the members opposite, to take over your pension.

You know, Madam Chair, AIMCo, as a fund management company, manages all kinds of funds from endowment funds to pension plans to government funds to special proposed funds. Some of the funds currently under the management of AIMCo are the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, the special forces pension plan, and the management employees pension plan. The entire public service's pension plans, all of those plans, are under the management of AIMCo.

11:10

For the NDP to sit in this particular Chamber and say that this is a takeover by this side of the House, you know, to somehow weaken the particular pension that is for the interest and benefit of teachers is ridiculous. I mean, nothing could be further from the truth. Again, it is always a case of fearmongering. But I think that at the root of this particular issue is the world view of the NDP. For those of you who have had the opportunity to take a look at the NDP constitution, there is something that is called socialism, and oftentimes we accuse them of being socialists. Many of them have also had to stand up in this particular House and want to run away from that, but in their own constitution, appendix C of the NDP constitution, under the Principles and Aims of the Alberta New Democratic Party, they say this:

> Socialism is essentially the application of democracy to the economy.

Member Irwin: Point of order.

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

Point of Order
Relevance

Member Irwin: Thank you. Yes. Under consideration right now we have an amendment that is relevant to something other than what the member is talking about, so under 23(b). He's speaking about our party constitution, which is not relevant, and I would urge you to call this out of order.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I know that in Committee of the Whole there is certainly a broad latitude. I believe that the member was certainly bringing his story into a direction that of course is part of what we are discussing right now in Committee of the Whole. I would argue that this is purely a matter of debate, and I hope that the member will be able to continue with his story.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. members, discussions frequently in this Chamber are not all on point at all times yet sometimes relevant to the discussion at hand. There has been a large breadth given to all members in this Assembly when it comes to that matter, but I would urge all members that, you know, temperatures are high. This is an emotional topic for many, and it's a good reminder for all members to focus on the task at hand.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has the floor.

Debate Continued

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is no doubt that I am discussing Bill 22, which is what the amendment before us is all about. I also listened to the opposition leader talk about some of the things that pertain to Bill 22 but were not entirely focused on the amendment before this House.

Madam Chair, you know, I was referring the House to appendix C of the NDP constitution. This is their document, what they say they represent. Again, they wrote:

> Socialism is essentially the application of democracy to the economy. Economic democracy, i.e. democratic socialism, assures production to supply the needs of all people. Decisions about what shall be produced, when and where, and decisions about where we shall make our living and under what conditions,

> are now left largely in the hands of private interests. The market economy produces transnational corporations, who give private profit priority over public interest, social justice and workplace democracy. Through the efforts of many, we have achieved a degree of social and political democracy. Economic democracy demands a co-operative rather than a competitive system . . .
>
> The New Democratic Party believes that only a revolution in thinking can lead to the establishment of democratic socialism.

Madam Chair, half of how we determine how we build a society that we can be proud of and that our children can be proud of is the lens with which we view the world.

Here you have the NDP, you know, when they were in office, when they were in government twice using closure to appoint the current Election Commissioner, and they also used closure on Bill 6. They have used it twice while they were in office, minimum twice, something that they have today stood in this particular House to attack us on. It's the height of hypocrisy. You will hear them argue: oh, circumstances are different. No, circumstances are not different. The fact remains that you've used something that you've called undemocratic. That is exactly the language that many of their members have used tonight to describe what happened in this House tonight, undemocratic. It's something that they've used at least twice. To every member in this particular House and to all members, everyone listening: that is what we are dealing with from the NDP.

Again, the corollary to that as well is our desire on our part to make sure that we run efficient government, to make sure that we depart from what we saw in the last four years, a previous government that believed that, you know, you can tax anything that runs or is standing. They would want us to pour money on any problem that they see out there without an opportunity to think through that system, to make sure that the system is actually serving the taxpayers of this province well. No wonder that here you have a political party that knows how to spend money without end, that doesn't understand that there's only one pot of money, that we don't pluck money from trees, that there's no pot there kept somewhere where we go and dip our hands to get money, and that there's only one taxpayer, who is either our citizens or our corporations.

What did they do? They like to complain about consultation, but they brought the largest multibillion dollars in taxes, that they did not consult with the people of Alberta on. They did not have a democratic mandate to impose that multibillion dollars in tax.

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand up and speak to the amendment to Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. Just so we're clear, we're talking about this amendment. Yes, I listened to the minister talk a lot about, you know, what we're saying: it is incorrect, there's no harm here, there's nothing to worry about, trust us. The reality is that this is your amendment. That means something.

11:20

The other part is that – I understand that you're a lawyer; I am most definitely not a lawyer – I do have issue with some words. As I listened to you talk about the words – and I'm not going to make any lawyer jokes or anything. Here's the thing. I'm going to play off what my colleague said earlier. There's a difference between "You may pay your fines for collusion" and "You will pay your fines for collusion." Do you see how that works, how that word works in a sentence? There's a big difference, and your amendment misses it. In my opinion, this amendment is really just trying to appease someone because I believe, Madam Chair, that the government understands that there is a massive amount of protest, blowback, and concern with this piece of legislation.

Although I do appreciate the government's attempt to make this really, really large, overreaching, unconsulted, undemocratic in my opinion, piece of legislation a little bit better, Madam Chair, you missed, because what you needed to put in here is, absolutely, "will." Don't leave any wiggle room, because I think that we all know in this place that it's really important to have language that doesn't allow for the wiggle room, that makes it very clear. "Shall," "will": that's clear. "May": not so clear.

Let's move on a little bit from the particular wording in here. The minister spoke up and just talked a little bit about: the opposition is really sort of making hay with this bill, and really, instead of raising legitimate concerns, what they're doing is creating division. Madam Chair, I take issue with that. I would say that causing division is perhaps having something like a little secret war room to report un-Albertan activities. Something like that would be divisive. Something like aligning yourself with a group like, say, Rebel media, that spreads hate and lies: that's dividing. What we are doing is our job, and we're opposing a piece of legislation that is, in my opinion, an overreach that is hard to describe.

Yeah. Talk about consultation: if you are going to take away whatever control exists for teachers and for other pension holders, the very least you could do is speak to them, and you didn't do that because, once again, you know better, but we're supposed to trust you, just like – you know, I think back, Madam Chair. Trust is a big thing, and I think that even if it was the correct thing to do – let's just say that moving these pensions was the correct thing to do and that it made sense for everybody, for government, for Albertans – you have to ask, you have to consult them, you have to speak to them. Why do you think they're speaking out by the tens of thousands? They're not okay with this. This attempt to try to make it better and then tell us that the language is, "Well, you know, you should know that this will work, no problem" – that's not right. That's not fair. I mean, you might get a gold medal for linguistic gymnastics, but that's about it.

I'd like to go and talk a little bit about – I read this article. I wish I would have written down the title of it. It's from, I think, the International Monetary Fund. It was an article about corruption in government, and one of the quotes that stuck with me said: corruption distorts government priorities. I would, Madam Chair, expand that a little bit to say that even the perception of that distorts government priorities because the government priorities should be – certainly, we have a different lens. We look at things through a different lens. But when you start to spend so much energy and time trying to silence people and to silence opposition, to limit debate, to not consult, to miss all of those really important steps that are part of our democracy, you are distorting the government priorities, and that's what this is about.

Now, I listened to the House leader kind of go on about: well, we have this position; we don't need the Election Commissioner. I would say simply, looking at the track record of the Election Commissioner in the last little while, that I'm pretty happy he was there. I don't know about you all, Madam Chair. I don't know about the people that have been fined. There are, like, $211,000 worth of fines, and if I'm not mistaken – perhaps I am, and if I'm to be corrected, then I will be – the independent Election Commissioner referred something to the RCMP. That seems pretty serious.

For anybody watching at home, if you are unclear on the role of an independent officer, the independent Election Commissioner, that, yes, is a new position, that was a new position, it was put in place for a reason, because if there is anything that we do in this place, it's that we protect and defend the democracy, the electoral process – and that includes the money that goes into the electoral

process – so that every single Albertan's vote matters just as much as their neighbours'. Dark money should not influence our elections. It should be about each individual Albertan casting a vote. It's pretty simple.

This additional layer of oversight was welcome. I welcomed it because I think that if you want to say that you promote transparency and you are a protector of democracy, you do stuff like this. This is what you do. I think that if we look back at the history of this tiny, little office – and it's not a big office – they've been pretty productive. They've been quite busy. They identified where people chose to not respect the law: $211,000 worth of fines. That's something. That is something.

For those watching along at home, if you have your computer or smart phone, I would say: check it out. It's at the office of the Alberta Election Commissioner. It talks about the role of this position, and it talks about the legislation that guides it. It's really straightforward, it's really easy to understand, and you can see why a position like this for independent oversight is so important.

> The job of the Election Commissioner is to ensure compliance with and enforcement of the Election Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act and certain aspects of the Local Authorities Election Act. Non-compliance and enforcement matters relating to federal elections do not fall within [this],

just so we're clear.

Now, I think the House leader, Madam Chair, if I'm not mistaken, earlier was trying to say something about us standing up and saying that the termination of this position was somehow being disrespectful to another position. Well, that's not true. These are two very independent positions. They do different things, and I would think that they would welcome each other's help. That's a fair amount of work. To properly oversee a provincial election is kind of a big deal. I continue to ask myself, like: why on earth would this particular government be so focused on getting rid of this person? Well, if you go to the website and you have a scroll in, you can read, you can learn quite a bit about this position. You might get a sense of why this government is really focused on getting rid of this position.

But let's focus on the actual commissioner.

> [Mr.] Gibson was Alberta's 5th Chief Electoral Officer . . .

That's great: lots of experience.

> . . . from June 2006 to March 2009 and previously held the position of Deputy Chief Electoral Officer for Manitoba. [He] has been working in the election field as an election administrator and an election management consultant for more than 20 years. He is a recognized expert in the area of election law enforcement. Lorne Gibson was a public representative on the Discipline Committee of the Manitoba Law Society . . . and a member of the Appeals Committee for the College of Registered Nurses . . .

I don't think any of us will dispute that this is an incredibly appropriate person for this role. I think that if you look at even the last few months, what this person in a very small office – I think that it's just the commissioner and actually four full-time employees that are doing all of this work.

11:30

So, you know, going back to what the government told us, Madam Chair, that really they were just getting rid of this position to save money, that it's all about saving money – that's it; it's just about saving money – yeah, Albertans don't buy that. Albertans do not buy that. A million dollars over five years and you are going to chip away at the oversight of provincial elections? That's not right. I don't buy it.

Back to the amendment. This is very clearly the government saying: "I think we made a mistake. Let's try to fix it. Let's try to fix this piece a little bit." Only you missed it again, because you didn't include the language that you needed to. What you needed to include was not "may" but "shall" and "will," and you missed it. This amendment misses it. You missed it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, I am very thrilled to see this amendment come out. I think it makes it crystal clear that any investigation or anything going on before the act comes into power will carry on. In the first revision the word is correct. The opposition has pointed out that it does say that before the coming into force of this section, it "may" be continued by the person.

But the amendment clearly changes that, and the article isn't "shall" or "will". It's actually "is." That's the article that changes it and makes all the difference, in my mind, even though I'm not a lawyer.

> The responsibility for an investigation commenced by the Election Commissioner by 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 is transferred . . .

"Is transferred." "Is" is a definitive article, if I remember what my mother, who was a teacher, taught me. I really appreciate that definitive article being in there. It makes all the difference to me.

That's why I am thrilled to support this amendment to make it very clear not only for us but for everybody who's partaking in this bill that any investigation is transferred. What that independent officer, at arm's-length from any elected official, chooses to do with that investigation is up to them. That's where the word "may" comes into force, their actions at that point in time. It would be entirely inappropriate for any elected official in this House to direct an independent officer in what they should and should not do. To me, it's very clear – and I'm just a layperson; I'm not a lawyer – so I'm thrilled about that.

I'm also thrilled that in the act they may appoint the commissioner again. I would assume that with an office of this repute in Alberta, if they terminate an office and create a new office with the same name under an arm's-length, independent Chief Electoral Officer, they would pick somebody who was competent, educated, experienced, thorough, prudent. I would assume that someone with those characteristics may be the current Election Commissioner. Maybe he'll put his resumé in, and maybe he'll be chosen by that independent, arm's-length person if he fits the bill.

I am sure that the current Election Commissioner in his investigations must have taken some notes, maybe has some files, some contacts, come to some conclusions. I'm sure that it's not just stored in his brain. I'm sure that being a competent, educated, experienced, thorough, prudent investigator, he would have written that down and that those files would be transferred to whoever holds that position, whether it is the existing individual or whoever else is chosen because they are competent, educated, experienced, thorough, and prudent.

For me, this amendment needs to be highlighted, and the primary fact of why it is being brought here is to make it crystal clear that any investigation is transferred to that office. That's why I am very happy to support it and thankful that the government brought that forward for all of us who aren't lawyers to be able to understand it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The custom is that a member of the opposition will speak next, so I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-Decore and then a member from the government.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that because I have been itching for the last little while to speak to this amendment. I've heard some very, very interesting comments here as this has proceeded along.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

You know, like the Member for St. Albert, I too am not a lawyer. However, I do come from labour, Mr. Chair. I've served as a shop steward, I've served as a union representative with the local's membership as a whole, and I've sat on the bargaining committee – guess what? – working on language. So I was listening intently to the Minister of Municipal Affairs talking about how these words are interchangeable. I highly disagree, because we've seen, as an entire labour movement, fight after fight after arbitration after arbitration after grievance around the word "may."

But you know what? I'm going to run with your idea here that they are interchangeable. Based on those comments from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and MLA for Edmonton-South West, that would mean that any future arbitrations, any future grievances, any future legal challenges arguing around the word "may" will now mean it's an automatic win for those people challenging that word that was used inappropriately.

If that's not the case and they're not able to succeed in those challenges, I would then assume that the government will step in, that the labour minister will say: "Oh, no. These are interchangeable words. They mean the same thing, so you have to award it to those grievers, to those ones submitting the arbitrations to the labour board." I have a feeling that the people from labour are going to be very, very excited about that potential now, that they will no longer have to continue to fight that word "may."

When I look at the implications that this amendment has, Mr. Chair, on the language that we currently have, when we talk about how the Election Commissioner will be terminated upon effect of this coming into force – and that refers to subsection (5) – in subsection (6) it says:

> The person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section . . .

which, of course, would be our currently serving Election Commissioner, Mr. Gibson,

> . . . held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act may be appointed.

So as soon as the act comes into force, he will now have his job again as the Election Commissioner, rolled into the elections office. That's how I understand it. That's your language. You're the expert telling me that he's getting terminated, and then he's immediately getting rehired right away to serve as Election Commissioner, which makes me feel a whole lot better because, of course, the Election Commissioner currently has somewhere in the neighbourhood of 800 different files that he is looking at. To take away the individual that has been working on that and depending on how long it would take to rehire somebody, it poses a significant problem, so I'm really glad that that transition now will be seamless.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Chair, is that, because of my experience, I know that that word is not the case, and I think we're going to have some problems moving forward. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview basically said that even with these changes, the bill itself still contains very, very significant problems. I have a feeling that we had probably a very incredible viewership tonight on Assembly TV, just based on the number of people that we had in the galleries watching the debate on Bill 22.

I don't think that this amendment is going to serve the way you think it will. I guess, at the end of the day, we'll see how that happens, and I look forward to watching how this rolls out, Mr. Chair.

11:40

The Acting Chair: The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to speak to this amendment. This is an amendment that provides clarity, and on the theme of clarity I would like to provide additional clarity on Bill 22 in a number of areas. To provide clarity, ultimately we have to go back to the rationale for the bill as a whole and the fact that Bill 22 is a budget implementation bill. Albertans elected this government to bring fiscal responsibility to the province.

Mr. Chair, fiscal responsibility is something that had not occurred in this province over the last four years, and Albertans were loud and clear last April. They elected a government who would commit to bringing this province to balance. They elected a government who would build a sure and strong foundation by responsible fiscal management that would ensure economic growth and prosperity not only for this generation but for the next generation.

That is the budget that this government presented on October 24, and it's that budget for which this bill is so important, because Bill 22 is part of the effort to implement that budget that we presented to Albertans. Bill 22 is about streamlining government processes. Bill 22 is about simplifying and improving program delivery. Bill 22, Mr. Chair, is about ensuring that Albertans receive value for their hard-earned tax dollars. Bill 22 is about operating efficiently and providing better value.

I want to speak a little bit about the ATRF pensions because, Mr. Chair, there is so much misinformation and fearmongering going around these days in the province around ATRF pensions. Firstly – and I've risen and made this comment time and time again, but I need to make it again right now – by moving ATRF investment management functions to AIMCo, ATRF will continue to own and be the managers of teachers' pensions in this province. Pension benefits will remain unchanged. The ATRF will continue to provide strategic policy direction on how those funds are managed. I believe there's confusion around who pays for a defined benefit pension plan in this province. Teachers pay for part of that defined benefit plan, but taxpayers pay the other half of a defined benefit pension plan in the province.

Mr. Chair, Albertans elected this government to manage the province's finances responsibly, thinking of this generation, thinking of today's public servants and tomorrow's public servants and the next generation. When we took office and I was sworn in as a minister last spring, I, like, I expect, all of the other ministers, asked of our departments to identify efficiencies, identify opportunities for this government to provide better value to Albertans, and the department came back with a long list of opportunities to find efficiencies, to deliver more cost-effectively, to save hard-earned taxpayers' dollars.

We know what the MacKinnon panel reported, that Alberta spends $10.4 billion more per capita every year than the average of British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. Mr. Chair, the MacKinnon panel put a fine point on where our problem lies, and we have to deliver much more efficiently – much more efficiently – than the previous government delivered on behalf of Albertans. Moving ATRF to AIMCo is a value proposition that will benefit teachers, that will strengthen their pensions, that in the long term will reduce their contributions while maintaining their defined pension benefits.

Mr. Chair, it will also reduce taxpayer cost to supporting the other half of pension contributions, which lies squarely on the government as the employer and ultimately on Alberta taxpayers.

But there's more because the government or employer contributions actually come out of our Education budget. As you know, this government committed to Albertans that we would not reduce the Education budget. K to 12 education is critically important even at a time of fiscal restraint.

Last year, Mr. Chair, Alberta Education spent $405 million on their portion of the defined benefit premiums. As we can find savings and efficiencies due to using AIMCo, which manages a larger volume of assets which will create economies of scale and drive down the costs of managing those investments, not only will teachers benefit – and they will – but Alberta taxpayers will benefit. Those funds that we saved will remain in our Education budget. By moving ATRF pensions to be managed, for the investments to be managed by AIMCo, this will add $20 million to the front lines of education spending every year. Albertans elected this government to deliver more efficiently, to deliver more effectively, to respect Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars. This move accomplishes that.

Mr. Chair, I haven't mentioned the cost to this government to pay for the unfunded portion of the pre-1992 teacher pension plan, which the Alberta government, Alberta taxpayers, have taken sole responsibility of. That is an additional $471 million. This government, the taxpayers of this province have every reason to be very interested in the risk management and the returns of the Alberta teacher pension plan. The really great part, Mr. Chair, is that the teachers' goals and taxpayers' goals are congruent. Both parties will benefit from increased returns, lower costs, and less risk. We have the same goals, the same end. This transfer of managing the investment assets of ATRF, moving that investment responsibility to AIMCo, will accomplish just that.

I want to reiterate a key important fact that gets lost in the discussion at every turn, and that is this: that ATRF will continue to manage the pension plan, that representation on ATRF will remain the same, that ATRF will continue to own the pension plan. The government is not taking the teachers' pension plan. ATRF will continue to provide high-level strategic policy direction for those pension funds.

Mr. Chair, I just believed it was incredibly important as we discuss clarity in the amendment before the House that we clarify some key facts around one of the provisions in Bill 22.

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

Seeing none, we will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Acting Chair: We will now move on to further discussion on Bill 22. Any members wishing to speak to the bill, Bill 22? Thank you. The Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

11:50

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm rising in the House to speak against Bill 22. We had quite a bit of patience listening to the debate on Bill 22, the views of the government House members from the other side, for hours and hours. One thing I really wanted to stress is that it does not change the fact that through this Bill 22 the government is taking the case in hand to remove this very officer, the position that is investigating some of the government House members. This is a fact. This fact did not change. It does not matter, like, how long a debate we have and whichever government House members, you know, rise to defend Bill 22. This fact is obvious, and it's still there. The government has presented this bill to remove the Election Commissioner that had been investigating the government House members for the last almost two years.

I just wanted to stress that in a democracy one of the important tenets of the democratic principles is the rule of law, where government and government officials have to obey the same law just like everyone else. This is something under this bill that the government is trying to avoid to protect the members of the government that are being investigated by the Election Commissioner.

Going into a little bit of history, in 2017 the Election Commissioner of Alberta had levied more than $211,000 in fines against people and organizations involved with the campaign for Jeff Callaway, who ran for the leadership of the UCP in 2017. The same year the documents leaked and showed that people working on UCP leadership campaigns for the Premier and Callaway for months exchanged strategies, ideas, memes, advertising, plans, and talking points. The commissioner has to date levied 31 administrative penalties against people and organizations connected to the Callaway campaign for allegedly funnelling money to Callaway to run a kamikaze campaign against popular party leader, contender, and former Wildrose Party leader Brian Jean. The Election Commissioner fined political actors for improperly funnelling others' money – others' money – not their money, to the Callaway campaign that was illegal, colluding to circumvent legal political contribution limits, and obstruction of an investigation. As a matter of fact, Callaway himself has been fined for accepting donations he ought to have known were prohibited. Mr. Chair, that is the reality of what we are debating here. That is what is existing as of right now.

Voting for this bill or even proposing this bill I would say is the largest attack on democracy. This is the greatest abuse of power that one can have. Just because the government six, seven months ago in the general election won the majority, it does not mean they can't play by the rules or that the government members will have a different set of rules. This obviously shows the culture of entitlement. When it comes to the ATRF, so many members of this side of the House, my colleagues, have very eloquently spoken on this issue. The hon. member of the government the Minister of Finance, you know, stood in the House many times and stated how beneficial this will be, that this will probably benefit the teachers and those very employees whose hard-earned contributions they are trying to raid, I will say.

If they're so confident, if they've heard this much expert advice, what is preventing them from talking to those very people whose hard-earned money they are trying to raid? It is simply clear that the government is moving forward to raid those funds to fund the $4.7 billion tax giveaway to big corporations because that is the hole this government has created in the budget. That move has not created a single job in Alberta so far.

I'm very concerned looking at what is happening in this House and what is being proposed. The systemic act of the government's proposal of almost seven years of going after youth workers, going after students, going after people with severe disabilities, and now the public-sector workers, teachers, nurses, when in fact the government is offering – not offering, threatening to force them to take the 5 per cent rollback. At the same time the government argued to give an unprecedented raise to their own people they hired for jobs, making the argument that their worth is much more in the private sector. This is very shameful. Looking at their systemic acts and steps, it's very, very important for us in this House to oppose this Bill 22, the biggest attack on democracy in the contemporary world, I will say.

I didn't plan to speak the full length of my time. The experts are actually, as we are debating this bill in the House, giving their views on the bill. I just wanted to probably reference one of these for the record to *Hansard*. The article in Global today by Heide Pearson is

titled Firing of Alberta Election Commissioner Called 'Political Interference,' Opposition Seeks Intervention. In this article the political science professor at Mount Royal University states – his name is Duane Bratt – that it is believed that the move is "designed to end the investigation of the UCP leadership race in 2017." This is not the view of the NDP caucus members.

12:00

The government House members are so confident. They have a majority. They're going to pass this bill by the majority, but Albertans will speak up. As of today I just wanted to give you the feedback. The people are showing up in my riding, in my office. Those very people that in the last election did not vote for us, that took UCP signs for their yards, that supported the UCP for creating jobs: they are showing up in our offices. That was a mistake, voting UCP in the last election. You can pass this bill, you can use your majority in the House, but the people of Alberta will definitely speak up.

You know, I'm deeply concerned by systemic moves in the House. Looking at the historic acts and the moves of the government, I'm afraid if we don't oppose this bill, if we don't defeat this bill, it is not going to stop here. The government will keep going on and on, one after the other issue. I'm actually extremely concerned about the safety and the security of those very people. They had courage to reveal the kamikaze campaign. I don't know what next step this government will take if this bill is passed.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Madam Chair, I'm honoured to rise in the House to speak against this bill, and I also ask the members of this House to please vote against this bill. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 22.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

[The Speaker in the chair]

Government Motions
(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Time Allocation on Bill 22

36. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good evening. Great to see you. Good morning, I think. We're into the next day.

Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time and the hour I will be brief. I do want to point out that it is my duty to move this government motion today to continue to make sure that the Chamber can progress with Alberta's legislation.

I do want to refer to some comments made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I believe her constituency would have been a different name at the time, but while she was serving in the capacity of deputy House leader under then Government House Leader Mr. Mason, she spoke to what was the last time that she spoke to a time allocation motion inside this Assembly. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, it was the time allocation motion brought forward by her government to appoint the current Election Commissioner. One of the comments that she brought up inside that was this. She said that in regard to that motion, which was heavily debated inside this Chamber, "it has been debated multiple times, for a total of about six hours," at which time the government closed debate on the entire issue, not just one stage of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that at this point we are headed towards nine hours already on this legislation. We are only in Committee of the Whole. At the end of this it will be over 10 hours of debate on this legislation. We still have one more stage of the bill to go, showing, certainly, the government's commitment to continue to make sure that the Official Opposition can do their important role, their constitutional role, inside this Chamber of holding the government to account and making sure that we are able to prepare the best legislation that we can for Albertans, which is their job. They certainly at the time of debating similar issues thought that six hours was enough for the entire thing. At that time, actually, if you look further into *Hansard*, you will see that when I responded to the hon. member then as the Official Opposition House Leader, I protested about six hours, certainly would have been a lot happier at that time as the Official Opposition House Leader if I had already had 10 at this stage of the legislation. That was at the end.

So I'm glad that I've been able to fulfill the promise of the Premier and myself as the Government House Leader inside this Chamber to always make sure that the Official Opposition can do their job inside this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the next hour of debate in Committee of the Whole. I do hope that the Official Opposition has some amendments. We would be curious if there's some input to help us be able to make this legislation better. Then, of course, I look forward to the next stage, which will hopefully be third reading, assuming that Bill 22 makes it through Committee of the Whole if we have the support of the majority of the members of this Chamber. I don't know if that's the case, obviously, until the vote is called. I do suspect that it's the case.

With that, I look forward with eager anticipation to the Official Opposition's response to this important time allocation motion and to seeing if the Official Opposition House Leader has some quotes

from me when I was the Official Opposition House Leader about time allocation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to add to the debate on behalf of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very concerned, and I rise to object to this closure, this time allocation, that's being brought in because it is absolutely undermining the democracy of this House. He is comparing it to previous closures, but I want to point out a number of ways in which this is dramatically different than previous closures.

For example, he mentioned that there was a time when after a number of hours of debate the previous government invoked closure actually to appoint the Election Commissioner, and at that time it was a completely different circumstance. We hadn't designed the closure before the actual debate occurred, which is what has happened here. They didn't come into this and say: look; we've heard enough about this. They said before they actually introduced the bill that they were going to invoke closure, and now they're invoking that closure. A completely different circumstance. It wasn't like they heard enough and thought it was time to move on. They never intended to hear things. That's what's different about this one.

It's completely outrageous going into the House knowing that you're going to subvert democracy before you even actually begin to have the discussion. This is something that has never been done before in this House, where they plan it ahead of time, introduce it, and then they make sure that the whole thing happens in a three-day period of time. Sometimes bills in this House take weeks to get through because government is wanting to present their point of view to make sure people understand it. But, clearly, they don't want to present their point of view in this case. They do not wish to be able to tell the people of Alberta what is going on, and the reason why is because the only reason they're doing this is not to do something like the last time, where we were just simply appointing someone to a position; they're doing this to avoid the investigation of corruption in their party, a completely different circumstance than the last time. To compare those two is just outrageous. The fact that the leader of the government side could stand there and make that comparison just tells us how much he disrespects the people of the province of Alberta, how much he thinks he can slide under the carpet and pretend: nothing's going on here, folks; please, look away.

12:10

That's not something we're prepared to do on this side of the House because we understand what is happening here. We understand that invoking closure is to avoid prosecution. That's what it's about. It's not to end discussion in the House. It is to ensure that they can continue to engage in practices which people in the media have been referring to as corrupt. I can tell you that the media over the last number of days has been very clear that they see this as an illegitimate, autocratic behaviour by this government. They think they can fool people, but people are beginning to hear about this, and as they hear about it, they are outraged.

People coming into the House, sitting here to listen to the debate about things that matter to them, find out that they're not going to be able to hear that debate about the things that matter to them because this government really doesn't care to talk to the people of Alberta. They didn't talk to the teachers before they took their pension plan away from them. They didn't go out and say, "Look, we have a great idea that's going to be so good for you and for government," because they knew that wasn't the case. So what they've done now is that they've come in and they have created a bill in which they are hiding the truth. They are subverting the process of democracy in which we should have an opportunity to speak to things that matter, that are fundamentally important for people, that are about the trust that's been put in the government by the teachers after serious and long negotiations with the previous government some years ago to create a pension plan that the teachers would have a voice in. Now all of that has been taken away without any kind of discussion.

That's a dictatorial behaviour and one that's completely unacceptable to this side of the House and is unacceptable to the people of Alberta. They do not want a dictatorship, they do not want these totalitarian and controlling kinds of behaviours, and they're going to tell this government in due course that they will not put up with it. We will not put up with it on this side of the House either.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 36 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:13 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Long	Rosin
Amery	Lovely	Rowswell
Barnes	Luan	Rutherford
Dreeshen	Madu	Sawhney
Ellis	Neudorf	Schulz
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Nielsen
Dach	Gray	Renaud
Deol	Irwin	

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 8

[Government Motion 36 carried]

Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 22
Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019
(continued)

The Chair: Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to stand up and speak. I will try and keep it short. I just want to get some things on record because I, too, have had the phone calls to my office, the letters, the e-mails, some very, very concerned, especially from teachers and nurses, about some of the changes and especially from teachers about the pension. Ultimately, I think it

comes from a difference in information and where they're getting their information from.

Now, I would like to challenge the multitudes up in the gallery tonight and the tens of people that are watching at home at this late hour. It is 20 after 12, after all. I'm actually going to clip the speech that the Minister of Finance just gave at approximately 11:40 to 11:50 this evening. I would encourage people to listen to that – it's written in *Hansard*; it will be there forever – and consider where they are getting their information from. Because I get calls from people that are friends of mine that are teachers. They're very concerned, and they're very upset. I say, "Well, where are you getting your information from?" And they say, "Well, you know, we're getting it from our union reps and from the ATA."

The Minister of Municipal Affairs read a little excerpt from the NDP's constitution, and I would like to add to what he said. I'm going to read you a little section from article 7, the provincial council and who makes up the provincial council.

> 7.01 The Provincial Council shall consist of:
>
> (a) the Provincial Executive;
>
> (b) two (2) members to be elected from the Party Caucus . . .

It goes down farther:

> (h) two (2) members of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

And then:

> (i) one (1) member from each of the affiliates in Alberta.

12:20

If you're a teacher or a nurse or a public-sector union worker in Alberta, chances are that you fall into the section of affiliate. I'd also like to add that as an affiliate every one of you members out there, since you joined your union and started working, have been paying $1.25 a month of your union dues that go directly to the Alberta Federation of Labour, and that's a fact. Now, you wonder where your messaging is coming from when your union leadership and the Alberta Federation of Labour are actually sitting on the provincial council for the New Democratic Party of Alberta? [interjections]

I'm going to go on, and I'm going to read you a little bit more.

> 7.02 Provincial Council shall meet at least twice a year at the call of the Executive.

I can see they're getting pretty riled up about this because they don't like the facts.

> 7.03 Provincial Council shall be the governing body of the Party in Alberta.

So membership from the affiliated unions and the Alberta Federation of Labour are the governing body of the New Democratic Party of Alberta.

Now, you wonder why you're getting misleading information from your ATA and your United Nurses association and your union representatives? The messaging is coming directly from the New Democratic Party. You wonder why you're getting conflicting, fearmongering messaging? It's because your messaging is coming directly from the opposition, the government opposition.

I would just like, folks, when you hear this fearful messaging that's coming out, listen to Mr. Toews' message. It's the truth. He stood up here. It's on . . .

Mr. Bilous: Name.

The Chair: Member, names.

Mr. Hanson: I'm sorry. Names. I apologize. It's late.

The minister went on quite eloquently for 10 minutes. It will be clipped, and it'll be on Facebook. Please share it. Before you fall to the fearmongering and the false information, consider your source. Please consider your source.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. Considering that time is of the essence – we now have less than one hour to finish debating this important and terrible piece of legislation – I need to clarify a couple of things that the member said. He's actually misinformed. The ATA is not part of the AFL, first of all. They're not part of the Alberta Federation of Labour. They are also not part of the NDP. The ATA is not affiliated with anyone. In fact, I'm pretty sure the previous member's comments have offended the ATA. They are a professional organization, just like the Law Society of Alberta and other professional entities.

Yes, part of – I'll explain it. They are both the professional body that approves who becomes a teacher – they set the standards – and they are also a union. They are both. But they are a professional organization. I guarantee that ATA members are offended by the accusation that either they are part of a political party or fund a political party. No, they're not. They are not. They are apolitical. They are nonpartisan. Individual members may choose to affiliate with a political party; the ATA does not. They are a professional organization. Anyone attacking the credibility of teachers or as a profession: I take offence to that. I'm a teacher. My teaching has nothing to do with my political views.

So for the record, to clarify, the ATA is not part of the AFL. They are not affiliated with a single party, not any political party. I encourage members to look at the ATA, and if they don't believe me, talk to them directly.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I would like to say every time I rise in this House that it's an honour because it's an honour to represent my constituents, but I'm not feeling very pleased to speak to Bill 22. This bill is absolutely an attack on democratic institutions. This is another omnibus bill, one of the many. I've got a few of them here. This was a Harper-era technique, throwing a whole bunch of bills into one, when each of the sections of those bills should really be a bill on their own. There are 31 statutes that are changed or amended in here. It's an absolute affront to democracy. It's an attack. As we've heard tonight, it's an attack on a whole lot of hard-working Albertans, which I'm going to talk about in a moment.

I'm not going to speak a lot about the Election Commissioner because I believe my colleagues have done a very good job with that. I've spoken a lot about what I've heard from teachers and nurses, but I can tell you that I'm hearing a lot from my constituents about the corrupt nature of this government and about the firing of the Election Commissioner. I find that interesting, you know, that the members opposite will insinuate fear and smear and will talk about how we're blowing things out of proportion, but I'm intrigued by the level of interest in this.

It reeks of corruption. I think why people are speaking out more than they ever have before is because it just continues. The corrupt acts continue. The entitlement of this government continues. I mean, we talk about the Election Commissioner, who is currently investigating the MLA for Calgary-East for fraud. We see entitled behaviour from this government already – what? – six, seven months into tenure: $16,000 charter flights; $18,000 for hotels; staff; something about vitamin C showers earlier.

What I want to speak about is the attack. That bothers me a lot because I have a lot of friends, a lot of neighbours, a lot of constituents who are public-sector workers. So I want to talk about pensions, and I want to talk about the unprecedented attack on teachers and nurses and other public service workers in this province. I was really proud to see so many teachers and nurses here tonight in the gallery. There's at least one teacher still up there in the gallery, and we're at – what? – about 12:30 a.m. I'm confused about a few things as well. You know, I know that the members opposite, many of them, have teachers in their own families. They're telling stories about how they've got a teacher in their family and that person is fine with it. Well, I'm telling you that 30,000 teachers and counting have reached out to us. And counting.

I wish this was just about pensions. Truly, it's not. It's not just about pensions. It's about so much more. It's about a continued pattern by this government of attacking teachers in many ways over a short tenure. I've spoken about this before. The list is pretty lengthy. We can point to things, obviously, like the attack on pensions, but we can point to other things. The curriculum review panel: set up a curriculum review panel, but don't put a single practising teacher on it. Yet, there's room for businesspeople. There's room for an American researcher, who is funded by the – who are they? – Koch brothers in the United States, a researcher who's focused, you know, on privatization and bringing a voucher-style education system here to Alberta. Yet, again, not a place for a single practising teacher to advise on what is going to be a curriculum for this entire province. Just one example.

There are countless other examples. We've seen a few examples tonight, attacks on the professional body of teachers, the Alberta Teachers' Association, right? Your insults aren't helping tonight. We're talking about tens of thousands of Albertans, and to insult them, as some of the members here tonight have, is shameful. And I'll tell you that the word will spread about this display, not just the comments towards teachers but the undemocratic acts that are happening, the invoking of closure on a bill that in itself should take many, many hours. We should have a fulsome discussion on the elements within this bill.

Let's get back to the attack on pensions. I actually want to quote the Alberta Teachers' Association. I was a teacher myself, just like one of my colleagues here, from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I respected the Alberta Teachers' Association. I still respect the Alberta Teachers' Association. They're the voice of Alberta's teachers.

> We put our hopes and dreams for our retirement into these pensions. We also put in half the funds! The least the government can do is let us have 50 per cent of the say when it comes to how the funds are managed.
>
> Now they don't even want us to have that.
>
> The Alberta government has proposed removing the fund assets from the [ATRF] . . . and transferring them to [AIMCo].
>
> This will not save the government any money, but could actually cost the fund through lower returns.

12:30

These are the countless e-mails we're getting, and as another member on my side mentioned tonight, these aren't just form letters. I'm getting a lot of really personal e-mails. In fact, I've had a few e-mails from teachers that I used to teach with not only saying, "How is this happening?" and "How could they do this?" but then their next question is: what can we do about this? They're getting mobilized. Teachers are getting mobilized. Nurses are getting mobilized. It's a whole heck of a lot of Albertans who are getting mobilized.

Now, it's interesting. We've heard this Premier talk about how, you know, he's sort of thrown around the fact that: "We might pull out of the Canada pension plan and create our own Alberta pension plan, but don't worry; Albertans will have a say before we do that. There will be a referendum."

Ms Renaud: Just trust us.

Member Irwin: Trust us. Exactly.

So he is willing to have a referendum on something like the CPP, yet he's not even willing to talk to teachers before making this move? Not even willing to consult with teachers? I think that that's one of the things that hurts teachers the most right now. He couldn't even bother asking us? He couldn't even bother engaging?

You know, it's interesting. I've been in this House only – what? – six, seven months, and I remember the members opposite talking about consultation and engagement and being so proud of their record and, you know, criticizing us for our record, yet, wow, we're talking about tens of thousands of Albertans. You couldn't even have had a conversation with them.

No wonder teachers are angry. They have every right to be angry. Like I said, I don't understand how the members opposite can't also be angry, because I know – I guarantee you – there are members in this House from the government who are not supportive of this move because they've got family members who are impacted. Now, I know that your Premier has said that you can have free votes, so I'm still hoping that there will be members opposite who will make use of their free votes and vote against this terrible bill.

As I said, I've heard from many teachers, many of my old teacher colleagues, and they're not just angry and furious, like I said, they're sad as well. They're just feeling deflated. Again, it's not just about pensions. It's about the continued attack on them and their profession.

I actually talked with one teacher who told me that, you know, she's been teaching for nearly 30 years, giving it her all, someone who's entirely active in her school community, coaching, doing so much beyond teaching, always there late at night, that kind of thing. She's been there nearly 30 years, so she's getting close to retirement, and she's upset. She feels betrayed. Why would they do this without asking teachers? That's a long-time teacher, someone who's been in the classroom for nearly three decades.

I've also heard from brand new teachers. One teacher talked to me about how she started teaching a bit later, in her late 20s, not that long ago, but she plans to teach for 30 years, so, you know, she's in it for the long haul, and she's excited about that. She mentioned how she struggled to get through university. She's now paying student loans, which, incidentally, I reminded her will be going up as well because this UCP government has also in their short term attacked postsecondary education. She's a new teacher paying into her pension, and she's now thinking: well, when am I even going to be able to retire? She's concerned about that.

I remember when I started teaching, I was out in rural Alberta. I told this story before. I was teaching in the metropolis of Bawlf, Alberta, and, you know, it was great. It was a great place to start teaching, in that village, but I remember that I didn't have a lot of money, and with every paycheque a lot of money went to our pension. It was a big chunk, and I remember thinking: "Oh, my goodness. This is a lot coming off my paycheque." But then you think about it: wow, this is an investment for the future, right? It's hard when you're trying to make ends meet, but you've got that long-term vision of: "Okay. You know what? It's for the greater good. It's savings. I'm putting it away." So I think about teachers like that, who are now in the position that I was. But they're facing retirement insecurity whereas I was feeling pretty confident when I started teaching that that pension was going to be there for me and it was going to be stable.

You know, we've heard a couple of the members opposite going on some interesting tangents tonight attacking teachers. One of the members, the associate minister for red tape, talked about, you know: Albertans chose a different path. I wrote down some of his words. And I'm thinking that, yeah, they sure did. Yeah.

You can go on about how we lost the election, but I'm hearing from a lot of Albertans who are having buyer's remorse. They didn't vote for their pensions to be attacked. They didn't vote for AISH recipients to be attacked. They didn't vote for their own income taxes to be going up. The list goes on. I mean, I want to let other people speak, so I won't go on with the list of attacks this government has levied on folks that they weren't expecting, that they didn't vote for.

In fact, we were out in the rotunda talking with a number of teachers and nurses, and one of the teachers shared a story about a friend who works at a large energy company in Calgary. She conveyed the conversation, saying that, you know, they were going back and forth for a while, and this person who works for a large oil company said, like: "Yeah. I voted for this government, but I didn't vote for this." Downtown Calgary attitudes are starting to shift. Folks like that who did admittedly vote for the UCP, someone who works in the oil industry. As I said, I've heard from a lot of folks from all corners of this province who are experiencing buyer's remorse.

Again, I wanted to share that story to encourage the members opposite to think about perhaps exercising their free votes and actually reading your e-mails. I know that, if you're like me, you're behind on your e-mails, and you don't always see your constituents' e-mails. Go through them. Read the stories from teachers, from nurses. Some of them are incredible, and some of them voted for you. So I urge you to listen.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I guess I want to come at it from the perspective of – I sit as the chair . . .

An Hon. Member: These guys here are getting time.

Mr. Orr: Oh. Okay.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Given that we are in the final hour of debate at Committee of the Whole, I certainly appreciate a little bit of the time to talk about some very real, serious concerns that there are in Bill 22 and the significant changes. My colleagues have talked about a wide range of impacts within Bill 22, which, to remind everyone, is an omnibus piece of legislation that changes 31 statutes, that does so many different things.

With my limited time to speak at Committee of the Whole, I'm going to focus in on pensions. Specifically there are some major changes to public-sector pensions in Bill 22. There's a very good reason why teachers and nurses have been in the galleries today, because of these significant changes, changes that in many cases put Alberta completely out of step with pension governance in other jurisdictions.

I'm going to quickly run through it because, again, I don't have much time, but there are some serious concerns. I really believe that we cannot pass omnibus legislation without fully investigating the questions that it brings up. I'm going to pose you some questions. We have to understand the impacts.

Firstly, with the change to move ATRF to AIMCo and removing the ability for LAPP, SFPP, PSPP, to leave AIMCo, AIMCo becomes the permanent and exclusive provider of investment management services. There is no choice. None of these bodies are able to change. AIMCo is de facto what they must use.

Secondly, AIMCo is an agent of the government of Alberta. As a Crown agency it is subject to direction by the responsible minister.

Now, we've only had this bill and been able to review it since 3:15 on Monday, an omnibus piece of legislation that does so, so much. Our ability to really dig into this has been hampered by the time pressures involved. So I want to say thank you to those who have been doing the work of analyzing this bill.

12:40

So we agree that AIMCo is an agency of the Crown, and as a Crown agency it is subject to direction from the minister. Our analysis of Bill 22 shows that there is no clear protection for public-sector pension plans and their members if there is a conflict of interest between ministerial directives and their obligation to act in the best interest of their clients.

Bill 22 is literally putting politics back into pensions. Our government worked hard to take politics out of pension governance, and, instead, Bill 22 firmly reinserts it. Most pension arrangements across Canada have no provisions whatsoever that allow a ministerial or political direction on investments. But here we're at real risk of AIMCo being directed for political purposes instead of in the best interest of pension plan members. The fact that Bill 22 creates a confusing and contradictory governance structure for Alberta's public-sector pension plans should be concerning for everyone.

Bill 22 should be clear: is it the responsibility to the plan members and to getting the best returns, or is it the responsibility to follow ministerial directives? Bill 22 doesn't tell us that. It's confusing, it's contradictory, and right now plan administrators are fiduciaries and owe their fiduciary obligations to the members of the respective plans, as they should. As a Crown agency the corporations will have obligations to the minister.

And in order to write a ministerial order, the minister is able to do that quite easily. I will note that federally there is the possibility for regulations to adjust pensions, but in order to do that, it has to be fully transparent, public. There are votes. It's a whole thing. Here: a ministerial order, and all of a sudden politics are directing our pensions and how investments are being made.

Now, there have been some changes on the boards for PSPP, SFPP, LAPP. The principle of proportional representation has been severely weakened, and it's taken a significant step away from the democratic foundation of the joint governance of pension plans act. It was originally set up to ensure that there were balanced interests and to make sure that workers had a fully representative seat, across multiple seats, at the table. But now the seat has been taken away from AUPE and given to non-unionized management employees, which, I will note, do not have the organization to let someone represent their interests on employment-related issues. There are no elections for this seat. There is no way to be accountable to the membership on employment-related issues because it's not set up that way. These are non-unionized employees, and unlike unionized employees, non-unionized employees are subject to dismissal without cause if, for example, an employer doesn't like the position that they're taking on pensions.

So we have a really big problem. The seat that has been removed from AUPE will potentially have decisive voting rights, and it's being given, in a way that there is no possibility for representation or accountability, to a person who may be under pressure from the employers. This changes the balance on these boards. It changes how

decisions are made. This is significant, and it's included in a larger, omnibus piece of legislation. I cannot emphasize that enough.

I also want to just stop and make note that there are 400,000 Albertans with assets in ATRF, PSPP, SFPP, LAPP. So 400,000 Albertans are involved in these pensions, and here we've already raised several significant concerns.

Now, I also want to mention what Bill 22 does that I didn't even realize Bill 22 did for the longest time because the minister never mentioned it. It erodes significant member protections that were provided under the joint governance of pension plans act. The rights of part-time, non-unionized employees to continue their membership in the LAPP and the PSPP have been removed. Part-time employees and their ability to continue in these pension plans: this is a significant concern, particularly during a time when this government is cutting back and hours of work are being reduced. I'm concerned about this, and I think pension plan members are concerned about this.

It is my opinion that members of the government should be concerned about the changes that no one has talked about in this House so far. The minister has not talked about part-time, non-unionized employees losing their rights to be in the pension. As well, the rights of all new part-time employees to join the LAPP and the PSPP used to be protected. Bill 22 removes this protection. I can tell you that the life of part-time employees is difficult enough. We've all heard about the gig economy. We've all heard about workers having to work multiple part-time jobs. Now the pension rights for these workers are being removed in this bill, but because it's a small piece in such a larger piece of legislation, an omnibus bill, nobody is even noticing. Well, Madam Chair, I noticed, with the help of some analysis of this bill, and I have serious concerns that it doesn't appear the government is interested in responding to.

As well as the concerns around part-time employees, successor right provisions have been removed. What does that mean? Well, it means that if an employer privatizes their operations or contracts out a portion of their work, the successor employer will have no obligation to maintain the employees' participation in LAPP or PSPP. I can tell you that there are many Albertans concerned with this government starting to privatize services to the public. Now, on top of the concerns that that might happen, we have the knowledge that thanks to Bill 22, if the employer privatizes operations or contracts out some or all of the work, then the new employer has no obligation to continue employees in the LAPP or the PSPP. That's a significant concern to workers.

So here we are. It's nearly 1 in the morning. We're in the final hour of debate in Committee of the Whole. I've raised a number of significantly serious concerns to do with pensions that impact 400,000 Albertans, on top of the already discussed, through limited second reading debate, concerns around firing the Election Commissioner. We really haven't talked at all about allowing political parties to merge. The government hasn't said a word about that, but we know that that's contained in this bill. The change to the ATB mandate: I have raised questions about what this might mean for the ATB and how this might impact rural Alberta, small-business loans. We hear crickets on these critical issues.

In my view, Madam Chair, Bill 22 brings politics into pensions. It confuses how pensions are governed. It is not clear through the bill. If the minister writes a directive and tells AIMCo how they need to invest their money, do they need to follow that directive, or do they need to follow their duty to their members? Bill 22 doesn't clear that up. It introduces that. We know that of pensions across the country, this is unique.

So I would urge this government to change its direction. I would urge all members of this House to not vote in support of legislation that has not been fully canvassed, that there are significant concerns with from all of our public servants, many of whom have come to stay in the gallery to watch this debate. I believe I heard that 29,000 teachers have sent correspondence of some kind on the issues of Bill 22. Bill 22 opens the door for political interference in pensions. That is what it is doing. Bill 22 takes away the power for workers to have a right and a say in what happens with their pensions, that they pay into.

12:50

This is their money. This is their future. They didn't ask for this to happen. The government certainly didn't run on it in the election. There are serious questions about how this will work and the impacts it will have, and I'm not hearing those being addressed, which is a serious concern to me. So I will be voting against Bill 22 in Committee of the Whole. We will go from a bill being introduced on Monday that looks like it's going to be passed on Thursday, with significant issues, concern from the public.

As much as the government would like to talk themselves into believing that this is the NDP stirring up fear, I can tell you, Madam Chair, that this is not. People are worried. People have questions that are unanswered. There are major topics like successorship that the minister hasn't even mentioned in this House. How many other pieces are in this bill that haven't even come up for debate? I think there are a significant number, just based on my understanding of Bill 22 and the things that I am still discovering as I sit here tonight through this debate reading the bill and trying to do the best job that I can as an opposition MLA.

Thank you for the limited time.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move an amendment.

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

St. Albert, please proceed.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be amended by adding the following after section 44:

> Coming into force
> 44.1 Sections 11, 12(2) and (3)(a), 13, 14(2)(a), (5), (17) and (18), 15, 17, 18, 27, 30, 35 to 38 and 40 come into force on November 1, 2024.

As you can see, this amendment actually extends for five years these particular changes that I think we've been talking about all evening, talking about why it's not just the perception of what's happening here but what actually is happening. By pushing it ahead by five years, what it allows for is an appropriate transition. Without sort of messing around with the language, it ensures that there is no interference in this investigation or in the investigations undertaken by the Election Commissioner.

I think we can all agree that continuity is important, particularly when we're talking about investigations. I think it would give the people of Alberta some reassurance, actually, that the government is serious about hearing the concerns around not just the appearance but what this bill actually does in terms of interfering in an active investigation, a serious investigation, a serious investigation of collusion, about donations and all of the things that we've talked about.

It's unfortunate that the amendment is getting ripped up before we're done, but okay. It sort of goes right along with closure and the earplugs, but let's just proceed.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to move this amendment, and with that, I will sit down.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment here, making, I guess you could say, an opportunity for the government to tap on the brake, push pause, and consider some of the implications around some of the legislation that's being considered here, particularly around the Election Commissioner.

One of the things that I don't think we've had the opportunity to really explore here, because we certainly aren't seeing it in the legislation, a very large piece of legislation – you know, it's funny. I've said before that history matters. Being one of those members that was around in the 29th Legislature, I certainly remember members of the opposition at that time making comments whenever a bill got over about 50 pages. They were quite concerned with the amount of information and the amount of time that they were able to digest it in and what kind of consequences there could be. Here we have an omnibus piece of legislation, one of four pieces of omnibus legislation that the government has brought in, that they used to criticize quite highly. As a former member of the 29th Legislature, Madam Chair, you probably remember some of those conversations around that. They accused the former NDP government of trying to ram through all kinds of legislation, which, coincidentally, at the time was all around just labour, within one ministry.

If I remember right here, we are talking about changes or repeals of 31 statutes and repeals of two acts, the Alberta Sport Connection Act and the Alberta Competitiveness Act. We're seeing changes that dissolve the Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the historical resources fund, the Alberta Competitiveness Council, and the Alberta Capital Finance Authority. This amendment gives us the opportunity, again, to kind of tap on the brake and take a look at what we're doing.

I really want to thank the Member for St. Albert for bringing this forward. Those, again, that might have been around a little bit in the 29th Legislature probably remember saying things along the lines of: "You know what? This amendment will give us the opportunity to maybe try to take bad legislation and make it less bad." When we are seeing changes that could potentially affect literally hundreds of thousands of Albertans and their money – I mean, I've heard the Minister of Finance go on at length about how great this plan is and how much extra money it's going to make and how it's going to lower our costs and everything. I think the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford kind of probably said this fairly well. I'll see if maybe I can repeat it with as much clarity: if it was such a great plan, Madam Chair, they should have been able to take it to these fine workers, and I would suspect they would have been clamouring over each other to accept such a great deal. But the problem is that it isn't.

It wasn't some kind of fear and smear plan that the NDP put together. This happened all by itself. It didn't even need our help. The media picked up on this; the workers picked up on this. I kind of think of it this way, Madam Chair. If we were all asked by our bank, "Well, hang on just a second; we've got this really great plan for your bank account; we're going to let this other bank manage it," I have a feeling that people in here would have a really significant problem with that. "I'm not dealing with that bank. I'm dealing with this bank. This is where I want my money. This is the company I want to have manage it." But we have legislation that's proposing a similar thing. This amendment, again, will allow us to tap on the brake, consider what we're doing. We might want to talk to some of the folks about what they want. Do they want their bank account to be managed by another bank?

1:00

As we've seen at this very late hour – we're already at 1 a.m. discussing a bill that, if it was such a great idea, there would have been no problem taking it to the people and saying: "Here's our plan. This is what it could do, and it's going to be great." I'll bet you that they would have come onboard. Again, here we go with history coming back. You know, I remember hearing at length about how the former NDP government didn't consult, that they didn't talk to anybody about anything. Then you get a new government in that criticizes and has the chance to show how to do it better, and they end up doing it worse. We've seen the people outside. You just can't ignore that. Well, I guess you can ignore it. You just pull down your shades, close the windows, turn on some loud music, and pretend it's not there. We need to slow down. This amendment I think at least gives us a partial opportunity with which to do that.

As I've said, Madam Chair, I have significant concerns around the Election Commissioner. Again, I know we had a bit of a discussion earlier tonight about language and one simple word and how they're interchangeable, but the problem is that my experience tells me that that's not the case. You know, when I think about an Election Commissioner who has 800 files or more, if we end up getting rid of that individual, what is going to happen with those files? How are they going to be transferred over? Will they be secured in the meantime, until the next individual can come in and try and catch up? I mean, 800 files: that's a lot. I think that's going to significantly slow down any kind of investigations that are currently going on, and I must say that there are a few investigations that are whoppers, I mean, fines over $200,000.

Ms Renaud: Two hundred and eleven thousand.

Mr. Nielsen: Two hundred and eleven thousand. I mean, you just don't rack up those kinds of things if there's not something significant going wrong unless, of course, there might be some kind of an idea of how to maybe derail that sort of thing.

We need to slow things down. We need to take this amendment; we need to accept it. We need to think about what we're doing. Let's consult with people about how they would like to see their money handled, not tell them what's going to happen. I mean, I think it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of – oh, yes; I made note of that – 29,000 letters. Not 29, not 290, not even 2,900, but 29,000 e-mails expressing concerns about how pensions are being handled by this government. That alone should be enough to push the pause button.

Again, I'm sure the former members of the 29th Legislature that currently serve in this House right now would have had significant problems had the former NDP government brought in omnibus legislation like this and not only once but four times in this one single session. We probably would have been here in these kinds of hours just listening to that alone, not even necessarily the contents of those bills, just the fact of the number of changes that are going on. If we don't press the pause button, Madam Chair, we are in for a rough ride.

I remember the government – we heard it over and over again. To be elected on creating jobs and growing the economy, they say that we have to bring back investment into Alberta. A simple change like taking hard-working Albertans' pensions and telling them what to do with it, I guarantee you, will not create labour peace in this province. Companies looking to invest in this

province will look at that, and they will hit the pause button. We're already probably upwards of around 30,000 job losses in a short six months, and you want to create more labour unrest? We've already seen the protests, more protests and growing protests in the short six months than I think we did in our four years when we were government.

Another favourite line: "The Official Opposition is here to help. We're here to help. We're going to help you take bad legislation and make it less bad. We're offering an opportunity to hit the pause button by accepting this amendment and giving us the opportunity to rethink how we're doing things." When there are 400,000 people, almost half a million, that are very concerned, and we've only heard – like I said, 29,000 teachers so far have expressed; I can't even begin to count the number of nurses. At some point in time you have to sit there and say: "You know what? Maybe this isn't quite the right path that we're on." Madam Chair, I'm really expressing sincerely that the government look at this hard, take the opportunity to press the pause button, relook at this legislation, and perhaps we might be able to make some bad legislation less bad.

With that, I will take my seat and allow others because all we have is an hour left in this debate, which doesn't give much time for voices to be heard across this province. That, unfortunately, is shameful, something that we definitely heard when members were the Official Opposition. Hopefully, others will get a chance to express their constituents' views.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for his insightful remarks. I know that there are only a few minutes left to speak to this stage of the bill. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talked about the significance of closure.

Briefly, Madam Chair, you know, bills normally pass through first, second, Committee of the Whole, and third, and there is always an opportunity for members, all members, should they so choose, to speak to each reading of the bill. When closure is imposed, basically, it limits the amount of time in debate that can happen in this House. Now, I appreciate the Government House Leader and others will say that there's been more than enough time, that it's been more than enough, that the time has been adequate to debate this bill. I disagree. I think we have different opinions on what is adequate.

1:10

First of all, Bill 22 is a significant piece of legislation that amends, I believe I heard my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods say, about 31 statutes. That's significant, Madam Chair. It's also important to note that this was introduced fewer than 48 hours ago. We're already in Committee of the Whole, and in four minutes this bill will be voted on. Because the government has a majority, I believe that there's a good chance that they're going to win that vote, and then we'll move on to third reading, all within one week. There are a couple of aspects of this bill that really fly in the face of democracy. I know that we have at least one teacher in the gallery, who is here at 1:13 a.m. listening to debate, I imagine, because she's quite concerned and I doubt was consulted on the future of her pension and the fact that this government is unilaterally moving teachers' pensions over to AIMCo.

Now, the argument that has been put forward by the Minister of Finance is that there are going to be cost savings because there won't be a duplication of the board or the ARTF with AIMCo, but then in the next breath he says that the ARTF will still have oversight; it's just that they won't actually make the investment decisions. That's clear as mud, quite frankly, and that doesn't make sense. For me, the frustrating part and what I'm hearing from teachers is that they weren't consulted; they weren't asked. This is a unilateral move by government saying that they know what's in the best interests of the teachers. You know, quite frankly, if the government is so proud of this move, then why didn't you talk to teachers about it? I don't think it was in their campaign platform. I know that there are often boastful comments about the 300 and whatever pages. I'd love for someone to point to where you claim to increase personal income taxes on every Albertan and campaigned on that one. This is another example.

You know, in addition to that, Madam Chair, the fact and the reason that I'm supporting the amendment to delay this coming in by five years – and as the Member for Edmonton-Decore said: listen, it will make a really bad piece of legislation a little less bad. It's not going to make it good; nothing could make this good. The shredder would make this good. But the fact is that the very individual who is investigating criminal charges is about to lose his position and we're told: oh, no; that won't affect the investigation whatsoever. Nobody believes that, quite frankly. At least this amendment delays this move by a couple of years so that the current commissioner can continue his investigation unfettered, uninterrupted, and we can get to the bottom of some of these serious investigations. I mean, it is a very, very significant matter that this bill essentially ends the investigation, muzzles the lead investigator, and we're told: no, no, no; don't worry; it will continue. I think from the letters that I've heard and that my colleagues have received, Albertans are outraged. Again, examples or similarities would be, you know: if during the SNC-Lavalin investigation the lead investigator was fired, do you think Canadians would go, "Yeah, that seems fine; there's nothing going on here"?

I think that people are flabbergasted, and the fact that the government is ramming this through shows that they're hiding something. They're scared to face Albertans, who are just learning about what's going on. This is just part of the reason why we normally take a couple of weeks to pass pieces of legislation, so that Albertans can weigh in on it. This was introduced this week, and I'm pretty confident that it's going to get passed tomorrow, and that's it. Again, you know, teachers: well, sorry, your pension has now been moved over to AIMCo, and if the government or future governments decide to backdoor claw some of your benefits from your pension, well, too bad. The government didn't run on that. At least, I'd love for a member to show me where in the UCP platform it talks about moving the teachers' pension from their own pension fund to AIMCo. Again, as I've mentioned before, Madam Chair, the fact that the teachers' pension has had a better rate of return than AIMCo: there's not even a financial argument that holds any water whatsoever.

This bill is awful, Madam Chair. It's antidemocratic. It flies in the face of democracy because it is essentially eliminating the very person whose job it is to investigate complaints. In fact, that position has over 800 complaints to investigate, and they're now going to disappear. How is that transparent? How is that democratic? You know, for those reasons, this amendment at least delays the firing of the commissioner by five years so we can at least get to the bottom of these active investigations, that are occurring right now. These are criminal investigations. This is no light matter. The fact is that this bill is an affront to Albertans' democratic rights.

It's also an attack on the future of the teachers. I don't know and don't recall any teacher being consulted on whether they want the government to move their pension over. For anybody in here who has a pension or even savings, if someone came in and said, "Yeah,

I'm going to take it over, and we're going to move it into what someone else feels should control your money," I don't think anybody in this House would say: "Yeah, please. You know what? Go ahead, take my money, and you can decide what to do with it."

The fact of the matter is that if the government is so proud of this piece of legislation, then why didn't you talk to teachers about it? Why don't you have a referendum? You seem to love referendums. Have a referendum with the teachers – what do you want to do with your pension? – and then respect their decision as opposed to making a unilateral move that they had to find out about through the media. Like, talk about not just a lack of consultation, but clearly this government is showing the little respect it has for teachers.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 36 I must now put all questions necessary for the disposal of this bill at this stage.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

[The remaining clauses of Bill 22 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 22 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:18 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Aheer	Long	Rowswell
Amery	Lovely	Rutherford
Barnes	Luan	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Madu	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Rehn	Walker
Hunter	Rosin	Wilson

1:20

Against:

Bilous	Feehan	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol	Loyola	

Totals: For – 27 Against – 8

[Request to report Bill 22 carried]

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 22.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no.

An Hon. Member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: So carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all hon. members of the Assembly for all their hard work this evening. Lots of progress today. I am just checking. I am going to move to adjourn the House till technically today, though it's tomorrow in legislative time, Thursday the 21st at 9 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 1:23 a.m. on Thursday]

Table of Contents

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