



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, December 4, 2019

Day 52

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

First Session

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

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

Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered at this time? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 21 in committee. You know, I was thinking about it this afternoon. Sometimes it is a legislative prerogative or a tactic to filibuster bills from time to time. Both bills 20 and 21 are so thick, with so many different topics. I've spoken on them a number of times here, and I still haven't picked off all of the areas that need to be canvassed, quite frankly. I think that speaks to just how, I guess, inappropriate this sort of legislative tactic is, and I would really strongly recommend that the government refrain from doing this in the future, these omnibus bills. I mean, what you can do is have a miscellaneous statutes bill, and then you can bring that forward, and we can all talk about it together and find things that we can all agree on ahead of time need to get cleaned up in the legislative process.

Taking substantive things that don't necessarily relate together and putting them together into these big omnibus bills: you know, it's just really clunky. You might think: oh, well, the public maybe just doesn't pay attention anyway, so it doesn't really matter. But they do, right? I was just having a conversation with somebody on the way in here today. They were at a function. The person said: you guys are on 20, 21 tonight, I guess, eh? This is, like, Mr. Joe Public talking about these things happening in this Legislature. So don't think you can get away with building giant omnibus bills and debating them in the middle of the night, because people are watching – they are indeed – and with good reason.

Tonight I just wanted to start off by talking about the issue around indexing. You know, if you have been an MLA for the last seven months or the last seven years, you know that a lot of constituency work that comes into your office is in regard to income supports – right? – either seniors' benefits or AISH and so forth. When we had an opportunity, finally, to form government and to put these income supports into an indexing formula based on the consumer price index, that was a huge step forward for ensuring that people would not be falling behind. I mean, already if you're living on seniors' benefits or seniors' lodge programs, AISH, you are living a very, very modest existence anyway. To at least ensure that as inflation pressures increase – rent, food, and so forth do increase in price over time – those benefits are indexed according to CPI, or the consumer price index: it's eminently reasonable, logical, and normal to do that. It was a long time coming, and I think that we really helped a lot of people as a result of that.

To move off indexing – and I know that the government is using the word "pause," right? But when we take something away, it's awful hard to get it back. Like, it took 15 years to move AISH to an increase that was commensurate with inflation and the cost of living, so I'm really, really reluctant to presume that a pause means that maybe it's coming back next year. Maybe that's the way we can approach this. I mean, I would certainly be less inclined to, you know, rally the troops and fight if we know that we are going to resume indexing next year. But once bitten, twice shy. I think that for the many Albertans that are living on these very modest income supports, they want to make sure that they have them and that they're not just being paused – a cut really is what it is – and presuming that they're going to come back. I think that it's probably a realistic approach to say: once you see it, wave it goodbye. And we all suffer for that.

When people live in poverty and they're slipping down on that poverty scale – in other words, not meeting the inflationary pressures that we live in in the province – you end up with a whole host of other problems that really end up costing more money for the government in the end. If someone can retain some measure of health and stability and mental health and security that come with, you know, the knowledge that your income supports are stable and will be indexed, then that individual is much more likely to be able to carry on in society, to live independently, and to avoid both physical and mental issues that can end up costing the health system considerably more than the nickel-and-dime cuts that you are proposing here in Bill 21. It's just like you are making an investment in ensuring the stability and the security of someone's modest income supports. I would venture to say that there is a direct correlation to having an exponential saving by those people living stably and reasonably healthy, both physically and mentally, right?

These support benefits include the seniors' benefit as well. We know that although Alberta's population is the youngest in Canada, perhaps the biggest increasing demographic population is seniors – right? – from now over the next 20 years, it's projected. Again, to make sure that we are having a stable, safe, and secure income support program for seniors here in the province of Alberta, our responsibility here in this Chamber is to ensure that our seniors population has that to look forward to. Again, it's a very modest benefit that helps to support a living income for people to live independently and to meet their physical and mental needs as well. Again, if the indexing of that against inflation is taken away, then instability and that descent into poverty are much more likely to occur.

Again, I really don't think that making these sorts of changes and cuts really saves that much money, right? If I can reach into the minds of the UCP cabinet, which I'd love to do – let's give it a try. You know, each person around the table said: well, okay; everybody has to throw something into the pile to reduce the deficit and so forth. But I think you have to take two steps back from that. That mindset is very narrow in scope. As I said before, making investments in income supports can help to save money down the road for acute health care costs and mental health issues as well.

Also, it's important to send a positive message to all Albertans. I know for a fact that the vast majority of Albertans are a very hopeful, sharing, and caring group of individuals, and what we do here in this Legislature is meant to be a reflection of the values of who we are as Albertans, right? So if you are somehow stepping outside of what is considered to be acceptable in terms of values that Albertans share – what we do here in the Legislature and what you do as government, making cuts to vulnerable people, is outside the bounds of what is acceptable to be an Albertan, quite frankly. We must ensure, every step of the way, that the values of the people that we represent are being reflected in the laws and the regulations

that we produce here in this Chamber, and this doesn't meet that test at all, not even close.

7:40

We know that seniors that worked hard their whole lives and contributed to this society suddenly have the rug pulled out from under them – right? – by not having an indexed seniors' support benefit available for their security and well-being. That's just wrong. You know it. When I say it out loud, you know in your heart that that doesn't wash. For us to enshrine something that is essentially wrong in legislation, like this is attempting to do here today, is not conscionable. I don't accept it even a little bit, and I know that most people in this room don't either. At least we in the Official Opposition have the latitude and the capacity to speak up and call it what it is.

The other issue that I have not really commented on too much in Bill 21 – I guess I just wanted to add a little bit more information around the tuition cap and the issues around advanced education, because that's my responsibility as the critic for advanced education with the Official Opposition. I have made some obvious comments on this from the time that Bill 21 was brought forward, but in the interim I have had an opportunity to speak to a lot of postsecondary education groups – student unions and advocacy groups and just individual students, quite frankly – that have given me more information about just how damaging this allowance for tuition to go up very dramatically over the next three years will be for the thousands of people that are in universities and colleges and trade schools and so forth and then the many thousands that are saving in anticipating attending postsecondary here in the next number of years.

We know very well that there's a huge demographic of young people sort of between junior high and high school right now that are moving through the public education system that will need both spaces and capacity in our postsecondary institutions right away. This isn't something that we can hope and dream about like it's, as the Finance minister said about diversification, some luxury that we might be able to entertain in the future. Postsecondary education for this huge contingent of tens of thousands of students that will be entering postsecondary here in the next few years: that is not a luxury that we can entertain later. That's coming. It's coming fast, and we need to build that capacity, right? There's no compromise. There's no negotiation about that.

You know, as we've all learned, I think, in the last few months, maybe earlier, we have the lowest participation rate in the country for postsecondary education and, interestingly, the youngest population in Canada, too. Those are just, like, two very significant and concerning numbers that will meet together in these next few years, and if we don't build the capacity for affordable postsecondary education for those tens of thousands of young people that will be entering into postsecondary, we will lose those people.

There is a sweet spot when people will entertain going to postsecondary education. You know, God bless the people that go back as adults – maybe they started a family and did other jobs and then went back to university or trade school and so forth – but that is not common, right? The sweet spot for getting someone to go to postsecondary and actually pick up a trade or a career and so forth is just a few years after they leave high school. If tuition rates rise dramatically over those next three years or four years, it sends a huge negative message to those tens of thousands of people to say: "Hey, sorry. You know, we just built this huge brick wall, which is a 23 per cent increase in tuition, and good luck with that." But the unsaid message for, well, many people is: "We just can't afford it. We can't afford to go. We'll move on to something else."

There's a lot of conventional wisdom in our province that we have to overcome, right? I hear it all the time. I was a high school teacher for 20 years, and I heard it all the time. I had to fight against it. They would say: "Well, you go to university, get an arts degree, get, like, a \$30,000 student loan, and you end up working at Starbucks. So why bother going to school?" That is the most poisonous thing that you can hear as a teacher or as a parent in terms of wasting the potential of young people that should be going to school and will enjoy going to school and will derive direct economic benefits from going to school and will become better citizens from going to school and create a better society from going to school. You know, we don't want to put up this 23 per cent higher wall with tuition to send the unsaid messages or the very loud and clear messages that say: "Sorry. You have to be quite well off to go to school now, and maybe you should just move on to something else." That's not the way to run a responsible government.

Yeah, I heard it loud and clear. I met with students from Athabasca University, for example, which is a really great opportunity for distance learning, where students can access university programs regardless of where they live, right? So it's very highly subscribed in rural areas. People were talking about having between \$50,000 to \$70,000 to, one individual, \$120,000 in student debt from Athabasca University. You know, I was astounded, quite frankly. I kind of knew the situation but wasn't thinking about the numbers. When somebody actually tells you those things to your face and you see their situation, then it all becomes clear. You know, good for these students for taking the risk to go to school and accumulate those kinds of debts and to know that it's worth it in the end.

But suddenly where's the breaking point? If someone has a \$70,000 debt, and you add another 23 per cent on top of that, maybe that's just the straw that breaks the back of that individual to say: sorry; I can't do this. You can do the math and say: "I could finish this degree. I'll work for 20 years. I'll be paying off the student loan for so many years after that." At what point is it worth it? Or at what point can you actually make it happen – right? – if you're a single mother, as this person was, or something like that. I just really am loath to think of increasing tuition fees so dramatically. That's what will happen, right? Mr. Chair, it's not like, you know, we would expect anything different.

I know that the strategy or the tactic of this government will be to say: well, universities set their own tuition rates; let's set them free. I think I heard that this morning from one of the ministers, that somehow we will set the universities free by cutting their funding. I mean, whoa, that's a leap of logic. It's almost astounding, in a way. It goes past being something I'd be mad at. It's just more like breathtaking. It's like: yeah, that's right; run free and try to hunt and gather the money you need to run. I mean, ridiculous is what it is, Mr. Chair, and I really don't want to be a part of that.

The other issue that I learned more about in regard to Bill 21 – and again it's to do with advanced education – is increasing the student loan interest rates. Again, it's easy. I know that the Premier loves to say that this is just a penny on the dollar or whatever, but when you add percentages on thousands of dollars, it's not pennies, Mr. Chair. It's hundreds of dollars or even thousands of dollars. And when you're a student, as many of us here in this Chamber today have been in our lives, or at least some of us, you know that you're not particularly well off while you're going to school. So student debt is a huge deterrent to getting people to go to school, and student debt has been increasing quite dramatically over these last number of years. Another increase of 1 per cent for someone who is going to school – and we did an average, I think, for an average person – can add up to \$1,800 more for their university education.

I know the UCP talking points. They'll say: well, that's a good investment, and they're going to really benefit from that. But, you know, again, it's another nail in the coffin of someone who maybe is not going to be able to go, right? They just won't be able to go to university, or that will deter them from going to college or trade school or whatever. Then that's it. You end up with less of our young population going to school during that critical time when they should and need to go to school, and you lose, at the very least, the economic productivity that you would have gained from that worker getting the education and taking that into the workforce over a 20-, 30-, or 40-year period, right?

These things all add up: pennies on the dollar for making your cuts, but you have pennies here and pennies there, and you add it to a percentage point. Suddenly the math creates a giant hole that people can't get out of. That, I think, should be a concern for all of us, and it's a reason to not support this Bill 21 as written here this evening.

The last part of Bill 21 that I wanted to just make a couple of comments about: again, it's sort of moving back to a theme that we heard earlier today when we were talking about Bill 26. You know, I found it astounding. [Mr. Eggen's speaking time expired] Oh, darn.

7:50

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Obviously, I will likely focus on some areas that I'm particularly concerned about, and there's a lot in here to be concerned about, but I'd just like to add to my colleague's comments about the cost of postsecondary education in Alberta.

I want to preface those comments. I think that investing in our youth and our children and their education is the most important investment that we'll ever make. They truly are our future, and failure to do that is a huge mistake that we will pay for. What I think is so reckless about Bill 21 in terms of postsecondary is that we're literally making it more difficult for youth to attend postsecondary. I mean, I think there are some students that are quite fortunate that they have families that have perhaps worked for them and saved for them to be able to go to school, or they have been able to manage high school and maybe a part-time job, and they've been able to put some money away so there's less of a need for student financing. But that's not the case for everybody, Mr. Chair. It's really not the case for everybody, and if we are looking to increase participation in postsecondary, this is not the way to go. I believe that it's harmful to our youth.

To just give you a personal example, my oldest – my son, actually – went to school for longer than I'd like to talk about, because it's really stressful. He went to school for a long time, more than 10 years. I started saving when he was really young, Mr. Chair. I started putting away \$25 a month, actually, from the time he was born. I saved and saved. I knew that I wanted to pay for both of their first degrees. I didn't realize that it was going to be, like, a life goal to be in postsecondary. I'm teasing him.

It's not possible. I watched him struggle after his first degree. He decided that he was going to do a master's. He worked, and he studied, and then he decided that he had to move away to continue. He wanted to do a doctorate. He went to the University of Toronto. I don't know if you've ever checked out what those guys make as TAs or assistants or researchers; it's actually pretty sad. He

probably would have done better just working shifts in a fast-food restaurant, actually. It was difficult, but he did it.

Part of why it's an investment to make things as affordable and accessible as possible is that they give back. They give back in ways that we can't imagine. Personal example again: he was about five years old, told me what he wanted to do: hunt dinosaurs. I was, like: sure, honey; that's cool. I always thought he'd change his mind. He did not; he continued. He's a paleontologist today, and he studies dinosaur teeth. Now, some days I fail to see the value of that because it's dinosaur teeth, to be honest. But what I learned is that through methodical research he was actually studying the development of all kinds of things like enamel, like dentine – I didn't really understand the value of that until he explained it to me – and then he made the connection with modern dentistry. What is really quite fascinating is what modern dentistry and research have learned about the evolution of teeth and the creation of enamel and all of those things because the two sciences got together. Now, that's just one example.

My youngest is still in school also. She wanted to be a vet originally, graduated with an animal health degree, wasn't able to get into vet school because there are not a lot of spaces in Calgary. There is another school in Saskatoon, although I think that Alberta has some spaces that are dedicated there. Again, there are not enough spaces, and we aren't investing to create more opportunity for our young people that want to pursue careers like that. I'm not saying that's why she didn't get in, but she didn't get in. She decided that she wanted to do something that she thought would make a difference in this world. She decided that she wanted to pursue teaching. Of course, I'm incredibly proud that she would decide that she wants to be a teacher. I think that is an incredibly noble profession, and I know that she'll be great at it.

My stories here are sort of going to one place. I was not in a position to totally help them out. I was able to help them out at the beginning because I saved, but the reality is that they had to work and save money. They had to get a little bit of student financing. That's the reality for most people. Actually, I would say that the reality for most youth is that they don't have families that have been able to save for them, and they are reliant on financing and working. You can imagine the stress that puts on a young person to have to do that, so it's not surprising that there's an incredible need for mental health supports in postsecondary institutions. I think it's tough enough to be there competing and learning and all of those stresses in addition to trying to earn enough money to keep yourself fed and housed and all of those things.

To put this into legislation that just takes a wide swath on so many groups of people: I think that's incredibly, incredibly short-sighted, to attack this particular group of people that really are our future. We're not going to be in this place forever, and they will be our future. They will be the ones that lead us and lead this province and country. Once again, to not invest in our youth and our children is incredibly short-sighted.

I want to switch a little bit and talk about AISH and income supports. I know that I've said this a number of times. I think that at the beginning of this I was really hopeful that members from the government benches would actually hear what we're saying about AISH. I know that most of the government members are fairly new. There are some that have been here longer, and I think that they can attest to the fact, as my colleague said, that the vast majority of casework that you will do relates specifically to income support and things like AISH.

Although I've heard the minister say that these supports are more generous than in other provinces, it really doesn't matter, actually. It doesn't matter at all what other provinces are doing. What really matters is the Albertans with severe disabilities who live here, who

we are tasked to look out for and to invest in, not just take care of but invest in. Investing in people is what makes communities stronger, and ultimately strong communities make strong economies.

I'll say it again. One of the things I was most proud of was when we indexed AISH. I wish we'd been in a position to increase the base amount more than we did. The reality is that we caught it up to inflation and then indexed it going forward. Although it's not a lot of money, \$30 to \$35 a year for somebody on AISH, what it is is a message that you no longer have to engage in advocacy every single year to say: "I can't live on this. I cannot live on 1,680-some dollars a month. I can't do it. It's impossible."

I think what makes AISH so different from other benefits is that one of the pieces that is reviewed and examined in the application eligibility process is the fact that the disability is so severe that it impairs that person's ability to earn a living and to support themselves. Now, there have been some people that have done really quite well in transitioning off AISH or starting to earn money and then have their benefits go down. That's fantastic. I think that we can do more to support inclusive employment and sort of move that transition along, but that's not the case for everybody.

If you think about it, someone in Alberta with a severe disability, a severe handicap: they are truly destined to live in poverty for the rest of their lives. Truly. They're truly destined to live in poverty. Indexing AISH benefits doesn't lift them out of poverty, but it addresses what it's supposed to. It addresses the cost-of-living increases that we all see every year.

8:00

I'll give you an example of a woman that I know in St. Albert who actually was injured. I think that her daughter was probably under 10 years old when she was so severely injured that employment was no longer a possibility for her. She is a single parent. Her daughter is still in school. She's on AISH. She rents an apartment for herself and her daughter. She doesn't drive, obviously. I don't know if any of you have been to St. Albert. We're fortunate to have a handibus, actually to have a few handibuses, and they have helped with the cost of that bus. It used to be \$5 per trip, so \$5 to go one way, \$5 to go another. It's a wheelchair-accessible vehicle. There are not a lot of options in St. Albert, so as you can imagine, rent steadily goes up. We all know that food prices go up gradually every year.

Now this mom living on AISH has to deal with increased costs for her daughter to be in school, and those are transportation costs. I think that you heard one of my colleagues earlier today refer to an article, an announcement from St. Albert Catholic. They're now assessing additional transportation fees in the middle of the year, and that's because of decisions that you are making. You are making decisions that are directly impacting people right now.

This woman on AISH, trying to raise a daughter, does get a little bit of a top-up, but all of these costs go up, and they mount and they mount. I can tell you that her budget is so tight that she has credit card debt because she can't make it work every month. And I'm not talking about luxuries; I'm talking about, you know, that maybe her daughter needs a new winter coat and she can't find one at the thrift store. I'm not talking about luxuries like: I'm going to buy a car. I'm talking about the very basics.

There's a reason why, I think, it's getting close to where 20 per cent of the people that are using the food bank in the capital region, or Edmonton specifically, identify as being AISH recipients. More and more towards the end of the month people don't have a choice. It's not like they're making bad decisions about: you know, I'm

going to spend my whole \$1,685 or whatever it is on eating out or SkipTheDishes. This is about budgeting and not making it.

A cost-of-living increase helps. It doesn't eliminate the problem, but it helps. I'm actually asking the government members to stop and think about it. I know you have got to know somebody with a severe handicap in your constituency, in your family, in your life. Think about what that's like for them. Every year they have to cross their fingers: let's hope that the government of the day decides things are good enough in our province – and I don't actually know what standard you're using – and, you know, let's hope that it's good enough that we get that \$30 extra. That's awful.

Indexing AISH was a way to say: "You are important. You are so important that we're investing in you. We understand that the cost of living goes up every year. We understand that. This doesn't actually cover all of it, but it's a start. It is something." People that are on AISH, that make it through that process – if you haven't supported someone through that process, you may not know that it's actually quite complex, and it is very difficult. It takes quite a bit of time, and it's not easy. Your disability or handicap or injury or whatever it is has to be fairly profound to be able to make it into that program to be supported, so to think that these folks that are on AISH and receiving AISH have a lot of options and choices is not realistic.

So think about your decisions. You have collectively decided to fund something like a war room. I don't exactly know what you're doing. I really have no idea what you're doing. But you've chosen to invest \$30 million per year to support one sector, one industry. I don't know what else the war room is doing because you haven't told us. That's \$30 million – \$30 million – \$120 million over four years. That would be over a decade of AISH increases. This is about choices. This is truly about choices. Who do you value? What's important to us? I'm going to say it again: investing in our people – all of our people, whether it's students, people with disabilities, our seniors – is always a good investment. All we are is a collection of people. At the end of the day, it is all about people. The healthiest communities have the healthiest people.

I wish I would have noted it, but I read an article – actually, it was a while ago now; I wish I could remember more of the details – and it talked about mental health and mental wellness. Obviously, there are huge issues and so many people that require support, but one of the tools that they suggested to address some of the mental health concerns that we hear about all the time was raising the minimum wage. Go figure. I don't know if any members here have ever actually lived in poverty or grown up in poverty – I'm sure there are some – but it is not easy. It is not easy at all. It's about really tough choices all the time. All the time. I'm talking about someone who had the ability to do other things or to make choices, but somebody with a severe handicap does not have the ability to choose.

I'm going to say one more thing about that. Increasing or indexing AISH or addressing the poverty of people with disabilities also goes a long way to prevent abuse, neglect, and violence. I can tell you this from first-hand experience as I know lots of people with disabilities that are on AISH, and very often they are unable to afford to move or they're unable to afford to leave a roommate that is perhaps abusive or to leave a relationship that is perhaps abusive because they literally don't have the ability to do it. They don't. That is what grinding poverty does, and that's what increasing risk does. If you are a part of government that is methodically looking at this particular group of people and saying, "You're not worth it right now; things have to get better for the rest of us before we invest in you," is that truly the message that you want? Is that what you want to be remembered for, truly, that you stopped indexing benefits for people with profound disabilities and people who are

living in grinding poverty? You are making that choice. All of you are making that choice. It's incredibly sad to me.

You know, women with disabilities: we talk a lot about abuse prevention or reduction. There are so many things to talk about, but one of the groups of women that is so frequently the target or the victim of domestic violence – incredible abuse, not just abuse from a loved one or spouse or partner or anything like that but very often abuse by a caregiver. A caregiver can be a family member. A caregiver can be a roommate. A caregiver can be someone that you hire. But it's about the lack of ability to have financial choices, to say: "I'm done. I don't want you anymore. I'm moving. I'm moving to a new place." When you start to roll back the measures that have been put in place to address poverty, you are increasing that risk to women.

If any of you ever have any interest at all, which it doesn't look like, in reading up about women with disabilities in Canada, some of the stats are absolutely staggering. DAWN Canada – that's the acronym – is an amazing group that has a lot of information that would let you know. It will paint a picture for you about what it's like for a woman with a disability in Canada today. I don't know. I would hope that one of you would check it out and talk to somebody with a disability and ask them specifically: what does it mean to get an additional \$30 to \$35 a month? It's everything. It truly is everything. It's the difference between going to a food bank or not. It actually is so incredibly important.

You know, I've been overwhelmed with e-mails from people on AISH. It actually takes a lot for someone to share their personal story like that, to talk about what it's like, and I've received e-mails from all over Alberta. From your communities I've received e-mails from people sharing their information about what that looks like. They understand that you're not stopping AISH benefits and you're not changing eligibility or any of that just yet, but you did stop the index. They understand that. They see you. They see what you're doing. I will keep telling them, but they see what you're doing.

8:10

They sent me some e-mails that are absolutely incredible. They're talking about: here's my budget. They're actually, literally, sharing their budget to the dollar. "This is what I pay for my apartment. This is what I have to pay for my insurance on my apartment. This is my portion of medication that I have to pay for. This is what I pay for a low-income bus pass. This is what I pay for groceries." Do you know what the average range for groceries was in a month?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

On Bill 21, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen to speak.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm always incredibly encouraged to get up and speak really short so that the hon. member can continue talking about AISH. I don't know. Hon. member, would that be something that would interest you, you sharing the fact that people who are living on AISH are sharing their budgets with you? Member, I wouldn't mind if you would continue on in that vein, if you wouldn't mind, even if it's just for a couple of minutes.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. I get a little bit, like, emotional when I talk about this stuff. I have worked in this sector most of my adult

life, so I know a lot of people. Actually, a lot of them are my friends, so I do understand how personal this is.

I have two brothers with disabilities. One is not here anymore. But the other one, you know, got a little help up and actually got a really great job that he liked, that he loved. I mean, he showed up for work early every day. Over 20 years later I don't even think he's ever missed a shift. He loves his life. There are great things that people with disabilities are doing. I don't want to make it sound like it's all, like, you know, depressing.

Why I'm telling you this is because investing in somebody with a disability is kind of magic, actually. When you do it well and when you address poverty, which is really, truly the underlying problem, you give people opportunities for real inclusion, right? That means learning with their friends. That means playing sports with their friends. That means living in a place that's safe, not having to live with a roommate that you really hate. You know, magical things happen. And when great things happen for people with disability, you start to reduce the need for so many things like access to acute care, access to mental health supports, access to the food bank, all of those things. I mean, you don't need the food bank when you start to have these networks of support. But all of this stuff is only possible when you invest in people.

Government members, you are deliberately choosing not to invest in people with severe handicaps. It's a choice that you're making. You're making a lot of other bad choices that I'm sure will come back to haunt you, but you are making this choice, and you are harming people.

I would like to read to you a couple of e-mails from people. These are not folks from St. Albert. These are folks from your constituencies, and I think it's really important for you to hear them. This message says:

Dear Marie,

I am writing to express my outrage and sadness at the govt. decision to de-index AISH, the seniors benefit and other payments. The measure of a government is not how it provides for people with everything but how it provides for people with [very] little. This government is truly showing its mean spiritedness and lack of compassion.

I deliver mail in a lower income area in Edmonton. I have had several conversations with my customers who receive AISH and other benefits who were [so] pleased with the decision ... to index the payments. The extra money may not be much but it meant [a lot] to them. Now to [take] it away is cruel.

I fully support ... the NDP caucus in vigorously opposing these mean spirited cuts.

That was not from a person on AISH.

This one says:

Dear Marie Renaud,

In regards to funding cuts, my brother has been dependent on AISH for nearly a decade. He had a brain tumor when he was five years old and the operation that saved him left him with a future, but with impaired motor skills and [severe] learning disabilities. Because of this he's struggled with maintaining a job and having independence.

Now in his early thirties, AISH has provided him with the chance to move out of our parents' house and live on his own over the last five years. This small piece of adulthood that most of us take for granted means a lot to him and gives him that independence that would otherwise be difficult on his own.

If [future] cuts are made, it would be devastating to [him] ... [devastating to his] independent life. If it came down to it, I know my parents would do what they [have to do] to provide financially for him, but they shouldn't have to, and my brother shouldn't have to live in fear that the leaders of Alberta would take away his rights to basic human dignity.

I am appalled to live in one of the [wealthiest] countries where the leaders will take what little the people have and continue to bail out the rich, but I still believe that there are good people fighting hard to change this and I thank you for your part in the fight.

Here's one from St. Albert that is quite interesting.

[Dear Marie],

Yes, [the Premier's] decision to de-index AISH will impact me.

I live in St. Albert, and have been on AISH since 2015. [I have] Cerebral Palsy . . .

The side effects of 54 years of Cerebral Palsy made it so that I [don't have any] cartilage in my right knee, a bulging disk, and spinal stenosis, [eventually] ending up in a wheelchair.

I moved into [subsidized, supported living] in February of 2017, with a cost of \$901.00 per month rent.

Here is the monthly budget as it is right now: rent, \$901; EPCOR, \$60; insurance, \$134; travel in St. Albert and travel into Edmonton to see the doctor, \$170; telephone, Internet, and cable, \$170; food, \$240; exercise class, \$45, which is awesome. There are actually subsidized exercise classes at Servus Place in St. Albert. I'm just saying. The total is \$1,720. So every single month this person is short \$40.

Recently, the lease amount for my one bedroom unit, which is also wheelchair accessible, went up from \$901 to \$965. Where I [am going to] find another \$64.00 when I am already short \$40.00 I do not know. AISH needs to go up with the cost of living for rent and food and utilities . . .

I would like to find work, but finding work that falls in-line with AISH [or even my ability to do the work, get there] is hard.

Here's a comment that actually addresses inclusive employment.

If you can work, there are [very few] employers willing to hire . . .

Oh, I actually know this person.

Accessibility is also an issue finding work, so we have rely on AISH . . .

We are still in the stone ages as far as people understanding and supporting the handicapped. We want equality, inclusion, but most of all [we want to belong]. If we belong, then we should also have an income [that makes] us comfortable and [able to] cover the [basic] necessities of life.

This is Alice. I've actually known Alice for a while.

Alice was really great to share her budget. You can see that she's not spending, really, much on anything. I think that, for all of us, to spend \$240 on food – and I know Alice lives alone. But to make \$240 on food last for an entire month, particularly if there's a holiday in there like Christmas – I know Alice doesn't have any family left anymore. But even for Christmas, I mean, this is a woman on \$240 for food for an entire month. You know that she's going to the food bank. You know that she's needing a hamper at Christmas because she can't make it work. I think that just her comment alone about her one-bedroom, accessible, affordable housing, that has gone up from \$901 to \$965, when with careful budgeting she was already \$40 short a month – to stand up and say, "We're deindexing because AISH benefits are good enough; you know, it's the highest in the country," it doesn't matter. That is irrelevant. What matters are Albertans, people here that we were tasked with looking out for and investing in. So the \$30 to \$35 a month that you have now removed from people makes a difference.

8:20

I'm going to try to read one more letter.

Hello Ms Renaud,

I'm not sure if it is too late to add my family's name to the list of families who will be impacted by the deindexing of AISH, but regardless, I will.

My son, who is currently only 16, and will age into the system under [the Premier's] current government, was born at 24 weeks and 3 days, weighing a grand total of a pound and four ounces. He tested positive for crack cocaine and was in withdrawal the first week of his life. He spent five months at the Red Deer hospital, undergoing various surgeries and procedures before finally being discharged into the custody of his teenaged parents. By all accounts, the mother was intelligent and loving but the father was older, possessive . . . and disinterested in parenting a disabled newborn.

My son found himself back in the hospital not quite a year later, this time as a shaken baby. He spent an additional two months in hospital while the government investigated. The dad was charged and found guilty . . . and as soon as the restraining order expired, my son's birth mother allowed [the dad] back into their lives [eventually].

Six months later my son was back in the hospital. This time it was because he was having seizures so badly he was stiff as a piece of plywood. He was found neglected in his own filth . . .

I'm going to leave this out.

. . . They begged my son's parents to call an ambulance but because of their previous experience with the authorities, they refused to do so. Instead, the pair, who [had] found this half dead 22 month old, called a taxi cab and stuffed [the baby] into the back of it and paid for his trip to the emergency room.

My son was again shaken so badly [that] his brain bled for 8 days. His body was covered in 60 percent chemical burns, from bleach the police theorize someone used to try and clean up the evidence of an obvious sexual assault. He lost his hearing due to the bleach burns.

My son spent four more months in hospital before finding his way into care and eventually at age 5 was adopted by our family.

And just let me say: thank God for adoptive families and foster families.

We're thrilled to have him. But he will never work. He's effectively a three year old toddler, [and that's] on his best days . . . He's a happy fellow but his contributions to his community are emotional only.

He is profoundly disabled. Severely intellectually disabled. Entirely blind, partly due to his premature birth, partly due to repeated brain damage . . . He is mostly deaf. He is non-verbal and has four sign language signs: Yes, no, all done and thank you. He is quadriplegic, has zero use of his arms and hands, cannot stand on his own for even one second; is tube fed, diapered and confined to a chair. His world is small. And now our provincial government is intent on making this world [a little] smaller.

I'm not entirely sure how an adult is supposed to live on [AISH] as it is. Especially an adult with complex needs who can't . . . feed or toilet themselves, let alone clothe or move without assistance. I'm not really sure of what will happen with my son once he turns 18. We live [in rural Alberta] and there are zero supports for people like my son. We, as his parents, aren't getting any younger . . .

We adopted our son knowing all of this about him but we trusted our government would help when the time [came]. That our government would take seriously the condition [of severe disability and what it's like for] severely disabled Albertans [to] live with [and that they would] treat them with respect and dignity. It is our great sorrow and disappointment to realize this is far from [the truth] under our current government.

This needs to change. This community of vulnerable citizens deserves better from all of us. Thank you for advocating on their behalf.

This is from Tanis and Bruce, who live in Beaver county, Alberta.

Mr. Chair, I received, like, so many letters. I don't even know how many letters. We reached out to all of the folks that sent us

letters, and not everybody agreed to have their letters shared. I have tabled a number of them, and I have some of them here, but this story is, like, not unique.

When you deindex AISH, it's not just a manoeuvre. It's not just: "We're just going to save money. We'll put it back when things get better." You're harming real people right now, today and tomorrow and in January. I know that you don't think so. I can tell by your reactions. I just don't understand it. I don't understand how people can stand in a ceremony for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, wear a button, wear a ribbon, and say: "Oh, yes. It's wonderful. We love inclusion. We want inclusion, but, yeah, we're going to vote on a bill that deindexes AISH, removing \$30, \$35 a month because, you know, they'll be fine. It's not that onerous." Come on. Come on.

Sorry. That's all I've got.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. I would just ask that the hon. Member for St. Albert table those documents at the earliest opportunity.

Ms Renaud: I already did.

The Deputy Chair: You already did? Okay.

Then I will also just remind all hon. members that when reading from documents, the intent is to be brief wherever possible. In this chair's opinion, if you were to read a complete letter from an individual who could have just come up to the gallery and spoken out those words, then essentially you're doing something indirectly that couldn't be done directly.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I personally want to thank the Member for St. Albert for reading out those letters. I was incredibly moved by the reality of the people that she was talking about. As she was reading, especially that last letter, I couldn't help but think of my own two sons, and I started reminding myself about why I got into politics in the first place.

I don't doubt that the members on the other side are also trying to make the world a better place, but they just do it from their perspective. I get it. But when you hear the reality of life that people on AISH have to live through – and it's not just the people on AISH; it's also seniors.

I'll never forget. You know, I was telling my own mom this story just last night. I remember a few years ago. There was a time, before being elected and before working at the University of Alberta, that I actually worked as a translator. This senior from the Chilean community had heard from somebody that I was a translator, and he needed help with translation when he went to the doctor. Of course, he called me up – he got my number from somebody – and I agreed to go help him for absolutely free because I'm just, like: how am I going to charge a senior from the community who's living on a budget just so that he can communicate with his doctor?

I'll never forget the very first time that I took this senior from the Chilean community to go visit the doctor. I happily drove, right? We went to the doctor. I translated for him, and then when we went back to his apartment, his one-bedroom apartment, he offered me a coffee, and he asked me to please sit down and just spend some time with him. He continued to talk to me about what his life was like living on a budget and how tight it was and how he really had to count the dollars that he was spending, very similar to the letters read by the Member for St. Albert about these constituents who live on AISH and how they're really living on a budget. When we deindex, yeah, it may only seem like cents on the dollar to the

people on the other side of the House, but that's a lot of money for people who are living on AISH.

8:30

I'm trying really hard not to be judgmental. Of course, I understand that the approach that you're taking is an ideological one. But I must confess that I have no other words to share but to say that it's just heartless. It is. People who are living on a budget and are searching – they're already not being able to make it to the end of the month, and now you're going to take that little piece away from them, make it even tougher for them to make it to the end of the month. Why? Why? We all want what's best for Alberta. Let's not forget that Alberta is all Albertans. In this House, yes, we may have differing perspectives on how we make this province a better place to live, but do not disregard the reality of the most vulnerable Albertans and what the decisions that we are making together in this House are and how they're going to impact those very Albertans that we are here to represent. It is our duty to make sure that all Albertans are represented, not just a specific group.

You know what? I hear it time and time again. We get up in the House and we talk about who we represent. You know, the members from rural Alberta will get up and say: well, we represent rural Alberta. I'll admit it that sometimes I even get up in this House and say: we represent working Albertans and those who are part of unions. We do. But let's not forget that all of us collectively are here to represent all Albertans. I would say that the most vulnerable in our society, like those who live on AISH and those who are living on a budget that's so tight that they can't even make it to the end of the month, those should be the people that we make absolutely, one hundred per cent sure that we're helping them make it to the end of the month.

I believe there's a saying, you know – and I always get these sayings wrong, but I'll attempt this one. Maybe some of the members from my side can help me out on this one. It's something to the effect of: show me how you treat your most vulnerable, and I'll tell you what kind of society you are. Something to that effect, right? So here we are, and we're about to pass Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I agree with the members on the other side. We need to make sure that we're fiscally sustainable. We do. We don't disagree on that, but where we fundamentally disagree is: who needs to make the sacrifices in order so that this government can make sure that we are fiscally sustainable? That is where we are fundamentally in disagreement. Making sure that these individuals – and I see that the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations shaking his head at me. I can't read his mind, so I'm not too sure what that's all about. Maybe he disagrees that we are fundamentally at odds with one another. So then why is he part of a cabinet that's even proposing this bill? That's the question that I have for him. Why are you part of a cabinet, a government that has decided – and this is, of course, through you, Mr. Chair – that they want to deindex AISH?

I agree with the Member for St. Albert. Just the other day there was a ceremony talking about people with disabilities and how we honour people with disabilities. Well, the best way that we can honour people with disabilities is making sure to treat them with the respect and the dignity that they deserve, and that's not just with words. It's with actions. It's with specific supports provided by a government that helps them, first of all, just in the first place, make it to the end of the month. Make it to the end of the month. Let's help these Albertans, who deserve our respect and should be treated with dignity, make it to the end of the month. This bill is actually subverting that by deindexing AISH.

Members of this House, with all due respect, I'm sure that you're here because you truly believe in that you want to make Alberta a

better place for all Albertans. I truly believe that that's what your intention is. But if that indeed is your intention – this is, of course, through you, Mr. Chair, to all the members of this House – then how can you possibly accept deindexing of AISH as a part of this bill? It's not only the deindexing of AISH; it's also the deindexing of seniors programs. As I was sharing before about this member from the community and what my experience was with him in terms of going to translate for him at the doctor and how he was sharing with me – I mean, there are cuts to lodge funding, kicking dependents off of seniors' drug plans. All of this is going to have a profound effect – a profound, profound effect – on the lives of seniors.

8:40

All these questions that I have in my head for members from the other side of the aisle – and I'd love to hear from the people on the other side, how they feel about all this, about these questions that I have for you, these specific questions that I'm asking in this House of you. I honestly believe that we all have good intentions. We all have good intentions, but when you're supporting Bill 21 and the deindexing of AISH and deindexing of seniors' programs specifically, then I've got to ask you: well, are your intentions really in line with what you're trying to do? I'll remind members that we're not here just to represent one specific group of people. In our constituencies we represent everybody, everybody that calls our constituencies home.

To the members who represent rural communities: I'll tell you that before reverting to Islam, I used to be really involved in the Catholic Church. I used to actually be a volunteer for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. We used to travel throughout the province regularly, and part of my volunteer work with Development and Peace was actually doing education around specific issues with the developing world or the underdeveloped world, as I used to call it, when we would go on these visits to rural communities. I got a chance to meet a lot of people from rural Alberta, and, you know, before heading out into rural Alberta, of course, I had heard all of the stereotypes about rural Alberta, but I also knew about all the stereotypes that existed about immigrants and people who were like me. I knew that those stereotypes weren't true, so when it came to the stereotypes of people from rural Alberta, I was like, "Well, I'm not going to believe everything I hear, and I'd rather meet people and speak to them face to face and get to know them before casting judgment based on some stereotype that I had heard from another city slicker," if you want to put it that way.

Let me tell you that I was so happy when I got that chance through Development and Peace to actually go out into rural communities and meet people and understand that they have hearts of gold. They have hearts of gold, just like people here in the city do. They care about their neighbours. They want what's best for their neighbours. It doesn't matter where you go in this world; I think the majority of the people are always going to care and want what's best for the people that live in their community.

So, then, that begs the question, Members: why do that to people who are living on AISH? Why do this to the seniors in our province? Why make life harder for them? Honestly, if I were to go into any community, whether it be rural, urban, suburban – it doesn't matter – and if you were to ask people, "Hey, I've got a great idea. Let's make life more difficult for our seniors. Are you with me?" I'm a hundred per cent sure that a hundred per cent of the people I would ask would say, "What? Are you crazy?" These are the people that dedicated their lives to building Alberta. These are the people that have contributed the most to our society, to our culture, to our economy, to our communities, and not only have they

contributed so much, not only have they raised children, but now they're helping raise grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. This budget, under Bill 21 specifically, is going to make life harder for them. I can't see and I can't fathom how we would ask any Albertan out there and they would agree with this. I understand that we want a province and a budget that's going to be fiscally sustainable as we move forward, but don't balance this budget, Members, on the backs of our seniors and the most vulnerable in our society. That is what I'm asking you here today. That is what I'm asking each and every one of you to contemplate here in this House today.

An Hon. Member: Say it loud and say it proud.

Member Loyola: Well, I'm glad that you find it funny. Members from the UCP are laughing at me right now.

The Deputy Chair: I just want to remind all hon. members to speak through the chair when engaging in debate.

If the hon. member could please continue.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Members of the UCP are laughing at me right now. Through you, the chair, I say this, of course. That's what's actually happening in here. I'm getting a little adamant, a little passionate about my perspective because I don't think this is the right thing for us to do. Bill 21 and balancing the budget on the backs of seniors and people who live on AISH is the wrong decision to make.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to speak.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise tonight to continue debate on Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I'd like to focus my comments for the next bit on one of the sections of the bill that deals with physicians in the province of Alberta. Now, of course, I do recognize that payments to physicians comprise a good deal of our spending in health care. It's understandable because physicians occupy an incredibly important place within that spectrum. They are the front line of care. They are where many people get the most attention in the system. The first relationship that most of us build, aside perhaps from the doctor and the nurses that birth us, is with our family doctor. So it's something of very great importance and I think very intimate and personal for Albertans, the relationship that they build with their family doctor,

Understandably, it's an important relationship that we set up between government and physicians in the province for how we provide and fund the provision of that care. But what we see with this bill is the government attempting to approach what is a long and historic complex relationship with the same sort of heavy-handed, top-down, condescending, dictatorial approach that they bring to so many aspects of negotiation within the province of Alberta. One of the provisions we see within this bill is a provision to give the government the ability to unilaterally terminate the doctor compensation agreement with the AMA. Unilaterally, Mr. Chair.

Now, we've seen what this government thinks of contracts. We saw that back this spring with Bill 9. That came forward and basically said: well, we're going to break contracts with a large number of front-line public-sector workers in the province, including many in health care. This government doesn't actually like to sit down and have a conversation. It doesn't actually like to engage in negotiation unless it's got an axe to hold over your head. Now we see perhaps part of why this government feels it needs to give itself this unilateral ability that no government in Alberta has

taken for itself before, with the revelation of their proposal to the Alberta Medical Association that was revealed this last Friday.

Now, I raise this, Mr. Chair, because I have had a large number of doctors reaching out. Indeed, I had over 20 health care professionals, including physicians, nurses, other front-line care providers, stand with me yesterday, raising their concerns in large part about this proposal from this government, which they are seeking, through Bill 21, the opportunity to impose unilaterally.

8:50

I have an e-mail here that was sent to the Member for Calgary-Hays, the Minister of Transportation, CCed to my office last week, an individual who is a family physician. He along with other colleagues provides full-scope family practice to the community of High River. That includes clinic, ER coverage, and in-patient – not impatient; I'm sure he's a very patient man – coverage. He says:

I voted for the UCP in the last election and, with a conservative government back in power, I hoped to see a return to common sense governance including fiscal restraint and austerity measures. From this perspective, I fully anticipated further reductions in physician payments over and above the recent voluntary \$200M reduction in physician payments generated by the AMA's SOMB Rules Savings Initiative.

That was the \$200 million reduction that we negotiated with the AMA as a government, Mr. Chair.

This doctor said: I fully expected that we would sit down with the new UCP government to negotiate some more savings. He welcomed that opportunity. He was happy to have a Conservative government that he thought would sit down and have a reasonable conversation. He said:

I would have supported a reasonable reduction to physician payments at this time, in line with rollbacks to compensation for other public sector employees.

On this, Mr. Chair, this is a physician who in fact would not agree with me on the proposed wage rollbacks for public-sector employees. This is a gentleman who is deeply predisposed to agree with this government.

But what does he say about the proposals this government is bringing forward for physicians? He says:

The changes outlined in these proposals are so deeply flawed and so terribly imbalanced that I cannot support them. In fact, I feel I must oppose them with great effort.

This is a man who supports and voted for this government, and he is saying that they're putting forward proposals so deeply flawed that he feels he has to take concerted action to resist them. Yet with Bill 21 we see that this government wants to give itself the ability to unilaterally terminate the agreement with these physicians without listening to them whatsoever.

The doctor goes on to say:

I have many concerns with these proposals, but the most serious is that they will undoubtedly have a dramatic negative [effect] on the ability of family physicians to provide comprehensive, patient-centred care.

This Minister of Health and this government like to talk about the fact that they are making these changes to improve and then create patient-centred care. This doctor, who was a supporter of this government – we'll see if he remains so if they continue on this path – is saying that this action, this proposal, which they intend to give themselves the power to unilaterally impose, would in fact reduce the ability to provide patient-centred care in a rural constituency represented by a government MLA and as a constituent of the Minister of Transportation.

He says that his rural group practice has calculated that with this proposed change just to the complex modifiers, so that being around the amount of time they spend with patients who have complex

needs, they would see a reduction in the overall billings of their clinic by about 30 per cent. He said:

These billings constitute not only my salary, but the salaries of my staff and also [have to] cover all overhead costs.

These costs aren't going to drop by 30 per cent, so how can you expect his business to absorb this?

How could any business be expected to survive if revenue dropped by 30% overnight? And make no mistake, family practices are businesses . . .

Indeed, this government seems to be quite comfortable with business existing in the health care system. They want to create more of them. He said:

. . . businesses which provide nearly all of the primary [health] care infrastructure in this province; therefore, it is in the interest of all Albertans that these business remain healthy.

So what he says is that he's really only got a few options to respond to this kind of a change being proposed by this government. He said: well, family physicians will have to start seeing a lot more patients; we'll have to start booking one patient per every 10 minutes and limit care to what we can get done in that 10 minutes of time. Boy, that sounds like a great way to improve patient-centred care, Mr. Chair. Limit every single person that comes in to talk to their family doctor to 10 minutes of time, one problem, one appointment: we'll see you in two weeks about the next issue. Yet in Bill 21, that is what this government wants to propose, that it give itself the unilateral ability to terminate doctor compensation agreements so they can force through these sorts of short-sighted, ill-thought changes.

Indeed, the doctor goes on to say that the pushing away from being able to actually spend time with patients with complex needs, forcing or incentivizing what he calls "high-throughput care," essentially fast-food medicine – he says that we're going to lose supports for patient-centred care and preventative chronic disease management. That's going to just disappear from the front line of health care, from the family doctor's office, and he says that as a result, the province is not going to save a dime. He said:

The only change will be in the reduction in quality of care provided to patients.

He says, well, alternatively, if we don't want to go with a one patient every 10 minutes model and just keeping pumping them through, family doctors could attempt to see one patient per 25 minutes . . . and reduce their overhead enough to 'keep the lights on.'

So that strategy, he says, would mean we'll lay off clinical staff and family doctors will simply see 40 per cent fewer patients per day. I have yet to have anyone come to me and say, Mr. Chair, that we have far too many doctors providing care in rural Alberta. Indeed, this government in Bill 21 wants to give itself the ability to force doctors to go and work in rural Alberta. But as this doctor is noting, either it's going to be fast-food medicine, or you're incentivizing doctors to simply see fewer to be able to maintain their business as it currently stands.

He notes that the Minister of Health

recently stated: "Nothing in [these] proposals will harm the ability of family doctors to give comprehensive . . . care."

This statement, says this doctor,

is patently and demonstrably untrue, so either Mr. Shandro's office . . .

Mr. Hanson: Names.

Mr. Shepherd: Oh, pardon me. I apologize. I withdraw.

So either [the minister's] office is deliberately misleading the public or they have no idea what they're talking about.

But through Bill 21 this government wants to give that minister the ability to unilaterally terminate any agreement with the Alberta

Medical Association and choose to continue in ignorance of what front-line doctors are trying to tell him.

He talks about how

rural emergency rooms are staffed almost entirely by family physicians.

These proposals would directly impact them:

a drastic pay reduction for family physicians [that work] in rural emergency rooms,

on top of the cut that this government has also put through to rural on-call doctors in those facilities. He says:

Yet these proposals will have almost no impact on the billing of physicians working in urban emergency rooms.

He says:

How is this reasonable? Why are rural family doctors facing such severe cuts when our specialist colleagues are not?

He notes that the press secretary for the Minister of Health stated that:

The minister looks forward to working through the issues with the AMA at the bargaining table.

But the doctor notes that

the problem with this statement is that [this] government has not agreed to negotiation.

He says:

In fact, [the] government has signalled it has no intention of negotiating with the AMA on these proposals.

That seems quite contrary to what the minister himself said in this House.

As several of these proposals directly impact physician compensation we have a legal right,

this gentleman says,

to collective bargaining over these issues.

9:00

This, Mr. Chair, is not one of those union thugs and socialists that this government likes to rave about. This is a man who voted for this government and a period of fiscal responsibility but is calling out the dictatorial, condescending, top-down manner in which this government is approaching that work. This is a man ready and willing to sit down at the table to help this government achieve these goals because he believes in their intent, and even he is so concerned that he feels the need to take concerted action to resist what this government is trying to force and impose and the effects it would have in rural Alberta.

I have another e-mail here from another family physician in the constituency of the Government House Leader, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. This doctor says:

As a . . . physician in Rimbey, I write to you with grave concern, that the recently proposed changes in the Alberta Health's Insured Services Consultation are inappropriately targeted at family physicians providing complex care to patients with chronic disease, and would incentivize low value care with unintended consequences.

He echoes much of what his colleague from High River lays out.

He says:

Removal of these incentives to provide comprehensive care to complex patients will mean [those] patients will be encouraged [instead to have] to book multiple appointments,

which means less access for other people, which means, oddly enough, creating more red tape for physicians, which is the direct opposite of what this government has said that it wishes to do.

He says that it will result

in increased health systems utilization,

force people to make more use, take up more room in an already crowded system that is straining and lacking enough doctors as it is in rural Alberta.

He says that removing

these incentives [simply] encourages new graduates, the ones that this government, through Bill 21, wants to use practitioner IDs to force to go and practise in rural areas of the province. It's going to force them to go there and then incentivize them to provide what this doctor describes as

episodic, walk-in style medicine rather than to commit to a comprehensive family medicine practice focused on continuity of care.

Mr. Chair, I hear these members of the government often talk about their communities, and when they talk about their communities, they talk about the value that you have in rural communities, that people care about each other. They take time to talk to each other, to understand how other people are doing, that they form relationships as a community and support each other, but this government, through this bill, wants to drive that out of the health care system, where people need that kind of comprehensive support, where it's the highest value for a doctor to have a comprehensive, full understanding of complex health care needs and instead incentivize a system of fast-food medicine.

The doctor goes on. He says, you know, that these changes discuss physician wellbeing.

He says:

I went into rural family medicine to provide service to a population in need, within a system that I believe valued continuity and comprehensive care when I graduated in 2018.

This is a new doctor, Mr. Chair, who of his own free will chose to go and practise in Rimbey, not at gunpoint because the government denied him a practitioner ID anywhere else. He chose to go there.

But he says,

[This] government's proposed changes [are going to] incentivize a style of medical practice that is [completely] at odds with what I am taught to provide and what I believe is best for patients. This can only result in job dissatisfaction, burnout and shorter physician careers.

This government has identified an actual need, which is more physicians in rural Alberta, and at the same time is cutting the fees that they want to pay to physicians in rural Alberta and wanting to push through proposals that are essentially going to tell those doctors, "You are going to work harder for less for longer," so they burn out and go, "Forget this. I got better odds back in the city."

This is a young man who was saying that that is not in fact what he wants to do. He wants to work in rural Alberta and provide comprehensive patient-centred care, and his government is telling him: no, we don't want you to do that. He says:

Already, I've had conversations with my cohort of graduates.

He said: you know what? With changes like this, we're looking outside of Alberta. If this is how our government wants to treat us and wants to approach us, the people that want to provide the kind of care this government says that it wants in the places where they say it needs to happen, then maybe it's time for us to start looking elsewhere.

He says:

I also write to you on behalf of the patients in our constituency, the constituents of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, represented by the Government House Leader.

He says:

They will feel the impact of these changes the most.

Perhaps if that House leader would rise, he could tell us how this young man is engaging in fear and smear.

He says:

It will be no surprise to you that the complexity of the patients I treat as a full time family physician in Rimbey are driven by a lot of factors, but . . . among them are age and social determinants of health.

He says: you know, in the municipality of Rimbey we have an average age of 43, compared to a provincial average of 38; a median income of about \$30,000, compared to the provincial average of \$43,000. He says that, as a result, the population that he treats in Rimbey

is more prone to chronic disease, mental illness, addictions, polypharmacy, so requiring multiple medications, and frailty.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 21. Actually, I'm very interested to hear the comments from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre because he has such great and deep knowledge with respect to the concerns he's hearing from medical practitioners on the contents of Bill 21. I believe he's actually listening to these individuals and hearing their concerns and actually is concerned about the longevity, the investments, and the sustainability of our health care system, particularly serving those in remote communities such as rural areas. I'd really like to hear if the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has more to share on this issue. I really appreciate it.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you to my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud. I will endeavour not to take another full 20 minutes, but I do appreciate the opportunity to round out my thoughts.

I think it is really important, when I as an MLA in the heart of the city of Edmonton – and indeed, I've had members to my right express incredulity when I stand in this House and talk about concerns that I hear about in rural health care. But if these doctors feel the need to include me on these e-mails to ensure that somebody is asking this government to listen to them, that indicates to me that there is a problem here.

Now, as I was saying, this young gentleman notes that there are many complex issues in the area: chronic disease, mental illness, addictions, folks requiring multiple medications and having to deal with the interactions of that, and frailty. He talks about travel distance providing another barrier to care, and he says that those patients are going to face a disproportionate effect from these proposed changes, these short-sighted, ill-thought proposals that this government wants to force through to save a few dollars, perhaps to help backfill that \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway.

He notes that the best evidence suggests that a strong primary health care system drives down health care costs. Indeed, that's what we hear this government saying that it wants to incentivize: more front-line patient-centred care that gets to issues earlier, before people have to go to an emergency room, before they develop a chronic condition, before they're in an acute-care bed or forced prematurely into a continuing care bed. That is the work this young man does, but he expresses deep concerns that the changes this government wants to force through in trying to force them to spend less time with patients are going to do exactly the opposite of what this government wants to achieve.

9:10

He also raises concerns about deinsuring the provincially required drivers' medical for aged 74 and a half and above. He says, you know:

Already, we are hearing that our patients prefer to attend walk-in clinics for this service,

despite the fact that they have a comprehensive approach to those medical exams to make sure seniors are safe on the road. He says that their office

takes 1 hour to assess a senior's appropriateness to drive, and if [this service is] de-insured, [they] cannot [possibly] compete with a walk-in clinic that provides this service in 10-15 minutes, completing the required form without access to the patient's complete medical history.

Basically, what he's saying is that an individual who a doctor has known, perhaps for decades, and has observed the deterioration or the progress of their health, if you take away the ability for them to be paid for doing this work and they have to charge for the time they would actually take to do this, then seniors are going to just be incentivized instead to go to someone who does not know them, has no background, has no knowledge, has no experience, and they will spend 10 to 15 minutes assessing whether or not that individual should be driving a vehicle, which is not good for that individual and is not good for the safety of our roadways, particularly for individuals who live in rural areas, where, as members of the government like to remind us, you are required to drive.

To the hon. Government House Leader this young man says:

I would urge you, on behalf of all patients in our constituency, to stand with me and oppose these proposed changes. I know this UCP government is highly motivated to make cost savings a reality, but these proposed changes have a high risk of driving overall systems utilization up by eroding the provision of comprehensive primary care in our communities.

That is one of my primary concerns, Mr. Chair, with a bill like Bill 21, which is an omnibus bill, which takes something this significant and with this level of impact and crams it in alongside a whole bunch of other wholesale changes from a wide breadth of legislation. The impacts from this decision could be incredibly significant, and I hope that these members of this government will listen to their own constituents who are responsible for and committed to providing incredibly essential and important care to other constituents of theirs and who want to be partners in achieving this government's ends of reducing health care costs. I hope these members will listen to them.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak in Committee of the Whole again on Bill 21, a bill that I have had the opportunity to speak to a few times already. However, every single time I rise, I run out of time because there is so much to talk about. Today I actually want to begin my comments with respect to Bill 21 particularly around the provisions that talk about deindexing AISH and actually give my greatest, sincere thanks to the passionate and compassionate and heartfelt comments from my colleague the Member for St. Albert.

In particular, every time she rises to speak on this bill or on any matter that affects the most vulnerable people in Alberta, particularly those with disabilities, I am struck by what an articulate and human and feeling and passionate advocate she is. I believe that when she stands up and she reads into the record quotes and comments from e-mails and messages she has received from Albertans across this province, not just from her constituency, it speaks to the trust that Albertans have, knowing that she is a true voice to speak out and on their behalf. I particularly found it quite heart-wrenching to hear some of the letters and e-mails that she had received, as I believe anyone in this House who was listening would have felt so moved. To hear those personal stories of individuals who are reliant upon AISH – and sometimes the heartbreaking

stories that have led to those situations are very difficult to hear – they also remind us of who we are here to serve. I'm really moved by the trust that Albertans have in the Member for St. Albert, because they do share these deeply personal and sometimes very difficult to hear stories.

I imagine a world where someone with that level of compassion would actually be the minister responsible for Community and Social Services, and I think about how incredible that would be to have somebody who deeply cares, not for political purposes, not for, you know, a desire to be in cabinet or to be in a prestige position within government, but to do it because she has an incredible amount of knowledge and truly is driven by representing these people in this Assembly and speaking for them, not to take their words from them, but to actually use their words and give them a voice in this House, which is really what all of us are responsible for, to actually give a voice to those constituents and those Albertans who otherwise would have such difficulties.

One of the things that I'm continually struck by, particularly when we're speaking about persons with disabilities, is how much they already have to self-advocate for themselves and how much their family members have to repeatedly advocate just for the basic services that many of us take for granted. Then to also take the time and the energy, because they have to, to actually reach out to elected officials and have their stories told in the House is just another burden that they have to carry, to continue to have to convince those of us in elected positions that their voices are worthy of being heard.

I really believe – I have no doubt actually – that the Member for St. Albert has received numerous, probably more than anybody else, statements and messages from individuals who are affected by this bill's decision to deindex AISH, and she speaks for them and gets those messages because they have trust. What I think undermines Albertans, particularly those with disabilities, in having trust is when they see it plain with their eyes, as we all see, that this bill actually is a cut to AISH. It absolutely is.

Now, I've heard the Minister of Community and Social Services, I've heard members from the government and from cabinet stand up and repeat back the inaccurate statement over and over again that there are no cuts to AISH, as if taking \$30 away from individuals who are receiving \$1,600 or \$1,700 maximum a month is not a cut. Perhaps it's because they believe what they've been told in terms of talking points. Perhaps it's because they think it's a meaningless amount of money. We know the Premier believes that. He has stated that he doesn't believe it's onerous. But it is plain as day – it is absolute fact – that this proposed bill does actually remove and cut funds that individuals who are on AISH aren't going to get. Every month they're going to get less as a result of this bill. I don't know if there's any more plain definition of what a cut is, than to get less than what you had before, than what this bill is doing. Yet we've seen these members stand up and say that isn't true.

We have seen that this bill – and I've pointed it out in my previous comments in Committee of the Whole – removes protections from Henson trusts. It actually states that persons who are applying for AISH will now have their trust funds, money that has been put away by their families to care for them when their family members are no longer able to – clear as day this bill repeals that provision. Yet we've had the Minister of Community and Social Services stand up and say that isn't true.

Not only is it frustrating as a member and as an Albertan to hear government members deny what is actually factually in their own proposed legislation, but what it also does is it continues to break that trust. It continues to suggest to Albertans that government members are not actually looking out for them. I believe that that is the fundamental problem that we have right now, that by refuting

what is in this bill, the government is breaking trust with Albertans. They're breaking faith with Albertans.

9:20

You know, I was a little surprised as well, I'll tell you, when I had a conversation at one point with the Minister of Community and Social Services. She seemed surprised when I told her that during my time campaigning and my time door-knocking during the election and prior to that, I had comments and conversations with a number of families in my riding who spoke about their children with disabilities, who spoke about the challenges around the family support for children with disabilities program, who spoke about their concerns about their children with disabilities having access to appropriate services and supports in the education system. The hon. minister said that she didn't hear any of that when she was door-knocking. You know, statistically I find that unusual because we know that no constituency has a monopoly on individuals and families with children with disabilities, but it also made me wonder if Albertans are not trusting the members to actually speak about these issues and to talk about these stories.

When we see after the election that the minister and government members stand up and actually try to deny to Albertans' faces that they are cutting supports for disability, well, maybe that's why Albertans don't have trust in them when it comes to this issue, when it comes to many issues, but particularly on this issue. Because while I believe the Member for St. Albert has probably more e-mails and personal, heartfelt statements from Albertans about the impact of this cut to AISH on their families' lives, I have yet to hear any members from the government read out personal statements or e-mails or messages from constituents who are on AISH who say: "Thank you for deindexing my AISH. Thank you for cutting my supports." I don't believe that any individual in this province would actually say that.

But, of course, I would love to be proven wrong. I would love to invite the government members to stand up, because we have yet to hear that as well, members who actually, some of them even just a year ago, were arguing passionately in this House about how important it was to index AISH, but there's silence on the fact that they're deindexing AISH now that they are the governing party. So I invite you to introduce and table in this House and read out those heartfelt messages from families of individuals or individuals who are receiving AISH who say: "Yes. Thank you. I don't think I want my AISH indexed to the cost of living. I'm fine to give up that \$30 a month so that you can give away \$4.7 billion to corporations because that's more important to me than being able to survive this month."

Please, again I invite members to table those messages. But perhaps they don't receive those messages. Perhaps what they're receiving – and we don't know because they're not speaking up to actually defend their decision to deindex AISH, other than to simply deny it, which actually isn't a defence. It's actually just factually inaccurate. I'd like to hear them say why they believe that this is an appropriate thing to do, especially those members who spoke out so passionately against it just a year ago. But that's not what we have. We don't have a government that's actually speaking for Albertans. We don't have a minister who's deluged with personal messages from individuals with AISH who are advocating for the cuts of the only meagre supports that they receive.

What we do have is members of the opposition and particularly the Member for St. Albert, because she has the credentials – she has the credibility; she has demonstrated her entire life that she is committed to representing and working hard for those with disabilities – so they trust her. They're sharing their deeply personal stories, and I know they're difficult to hear. I found them very

difficult to hear, and I found it difficult to meet with parents of children who may be on AISH one day, who are currently disabled, who are crying in my constituency office because they don't know how they can have any comfort at all that after they pass, their children with severe disabilities will be protected and will have full access to AISH without being penalized for the fact that their family has planned ahead, into the future, for them.

I'm certain that I am not the only member who has had that experience. We already know that the Member for St. Albert has. I've heard many of my colleagues on the opposition side of the House speak about those. But I have yet to hear any of those members in government stand up and say: "You know what? I'm listening to my constituents as well, and I believe it's important to protect the most basic allowances that we provide to those with severe disabilities."

Again I'm going to quote my colleague the Member for St. Albert because I've been so inspired by her in the last little while. This is a new relationship. I didn't know the member prior to being elected. But I consistently hear her stand up with such honesty and conviction. Just recently in this Legislature she talked about actually measuring our progress with respect to serving persons with disabilities. She stood up and said, "It's not enough to give platitudes," which, unfortunately, is all we are hearing from the government, who say: "Of course, we care about persons with disabilities. But we're just going to cut their most basic services and make it more difficult for their families to have comfort that they will be protected going into the future."

Actually, the Member for St. Albert said that, you know, we do need to take measure and we need to evaluate. We can't just say that we care about these individuals. We need to actually put action into words and measure how we're doing, and that measure is actually that we're leaving no one behind. Yet I don't see that same measure of conviction from this government. I just think what a different world this could be for persons with disabilities, for vulnerable people on AISH if we had a minister with the same level of conviction and honesty and credibility as the Member for St. Albert.

I want to move to another part of Bill 21. Again, my colleagues have spoken to this issue, but I haven't yet had an opportunity to, so I'd like to raise it myself, and that's with respect to the attacks that Bill 21 makes on postsecondary education. Now, I think it's important – and I don't think this is lost on Albertans – to see that the cuts that we are seeing under Bill 21 to postsecondary education are simply a continuum of this government's underfunding and kneecapping of education from birth to adulthood. We know that we're already seeing within the Ministry of Children's Services that early learning coalitions have been defunded, parent link centres have had their contracts cut. We see that the Minister of Children's Services does not support early childhood learning, which is a key part of universal child care.

We know that the research and evidence is very clear that if you support education and early learning from a very young age for children, you can address issues, you can prepare them better for school, and an investment in that young age – we know there are brain studies. We used to in this government do early development, EDI, tracking to talk about the vulnerabilities of young children, and we know that if we invest in those early years, we actually, from a purely economic perspective, save ourselves so much more money down the road. We already see that this government does not believe in that prevention and investment in early learning. That's already clear.

Then the K to 12 education system. I'm speaking as a parent who has one child who just began grade 1, another child who will be starting kindergarten next year. I'm deeply troubled by this

government's lack of support for education, particularly for public education, and I think we're seeing an attack on all fronts with respect to that. But, again, we live in a bizarro world where it's clear that we have repeated about the school boards, we have all the facts and figures to show that education funding has been cut, but because they kept one budget line item the same, they get to stand up and say that education funding has been maintained, which is factually inaccurate when we know that there are so many other lines to education funding and they've cut three significant grants to education. It's not addressing enrolment growth. We know that. That is factual as well.

I could probably speak at length about how this education system is being undercut and is really being handicapped by this government, but let's talk about what's in Bill 21, which is the handicapping of our postsecondary system. This is just again a continuation of the attack on education overall, on Albertans that this government is making, certainly by removing the cap on tuition, which they've done through this bill, increasing the interest rate that young people or any person, actually, in their life who's seeking postsecondary will pay on their student loans, and cutting education and tuition tax credits.

It appears that this government seems to be deeply afraid of educating Albertans, and I'm not sure why that fear is there. I certainly know that it is very short-sighted purely from an economic perspective, because when we invest in education, whether it be in a child who's three years old or four years old or in the education system in K to 12 and then going on to postsecondary, we know that we all reap the benefits of an educated population. Yet this government seems intent to make it as difficult as possible for Albertans to actually be educated, to succeed, to contribute in meaningful ways to the economy. Perhaps it's the critical thinking skills that this government is most afraid of, but they certainly do not seem to be supporting postsecondary.

I can tell you from my own personal experience that my family was not able to contribute to my postsecondary education in its entirety. They certainly did contribute as they could for my first couple of years of my undergraduate degree, but from that point on I was on my own, and I certainly incurred a significant level of student debt in order to complete my undergraduate degree and then to go on to complete my law degree. I took on that debt myself, and I have only been able to pay it off, after practising law for 13 years, last year. That was the challenge that I took on.

9:30

I recall, when I moved from the University of Alberta, where I did my undergraduate degree – and this was in the late 1990s, early 2000s – that there was a lot of discussion under the former Progressive Conservative governments about increasing tuition, and postsecondary students rallied against this because they understood, as we all should, that postsecondary education should not be something that's available only to those who can afford it or who can take on the significant debt that is required to get it. They believed that we all benefit and that everybody should have equitable access to postsecondary education.

I moved on to my law degree at the University of Toronto, which was an interesting experience because I found myself surrounded by postsecondary students who were a little bit different from the ones that I was around at the University of Alberta. Particularly, a number of my fellow students in law school came from very wealthy families. They came from families that had a long history of lawyers and large, very reputable law firms, former judges, all that, very wealthy families. I'll never forget within my first week or so . . . [interjection] I just want to pause one moment because, you know, it's very clear that when the Government House Leader

enters a room, he always likes to make his presence known, so perhaps I could acknowledge it on *Hansard* since he needs so much attention.

Going back to my experience at the University of Toronto, I remember being quite struck by the fact that I was in law school, and there was a significant tuition increase that was actually instituted in my first year of law school. In fact, law school tuition that year actually tripled, and that was a decision that was made by the University of Toronto because they decided they wanted to compete with American-style law schools. I won't get into that. One of the moments that really stuck out to me was when I was having a discussion with some of my fellow law students about the increase in tuition. I'd just come from a climate of a lot of students who really cared about equitable access to postsecondary. I was quite struck by what a number of students said. I remember this because I was so shocked to hear it. One of them actually point-blank said: you know, if you can't afford to go to law school, I don't think people should. I thought: wow, what an enormous amount of privilege behind that statement, the idea that only those who could afford to go to the most expensive law school in the country should go.

I thought: hmm, is that what we're trying to do here, trying to ensure that only those who are wealthy can afford to go to postsecondary education? Not only is that short-sighted, not only is that inequitable, not only does that increase barriers to people who are already marginalized – individuals with disabilities, indigenous groups, women, persons of colour, who traditionally face greater barriers to access postsecondary – but it also demonstrates that there was a sense that . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Chair's Ruling Reading from Documents

The Deputy Chair: Given your invitation to the House with regard to all members perhaps reading in correspondence that they may or may not have received, I'll just take this quick opportunity to remind members that "a speech should not . . . consist only of a single long quotation, or a series of quotations joined together with a few original sentences." I think that applies to all of us, and if you have any questions on that, I think *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, page 152 at, I believe, paragraph 496, is a starting point on that.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Chair: Are there any hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: My apologies. In a previous statement I might have actually said St. Albert when I in fact meant Edmonton-Whitemud. My correction.

Hon. Member for St. Albert, please continue.

Ms Renaud: Yeah. I just certainly have a lot of things to say about this bill, but I so enjoy sitting next to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, and I would actually love to hear more about what she has to say. I think it's incredibly fascinating to have that insight in your postsecondary journey and to hear why changes like this are so devastating, actually, to people that are perhaps marginalized for whatever reason.

With that, I will take my seat.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Member for St. Albert for inviting me to finish my comments. I simply wanted to reiterate that I think that any postsecondary system which approaches it as though only those who can afford to go, which, let's be honest, is very few people – very few people have thousands of dollars at their disposal, especially when they're just coming out of the school system and now don't even have access to things like, say, the STEP program to actually earn some money and to get some internship and experience in a field that they're interested in.

The idea that postsecondary should be inaccessible: I thought that was simply an outrageous statement that came from those with extreme privilege, but now I see that it actually seems to be the guiding principle of this government. It's not that I believe that all the members within the government have the enormous wealth to be able to afford education, but I do believe that they're trying to make it more difficult for average Albertans to be able to access postsecondary.

You know, I appreciate that there absolutely should be levels of responsibility that are taken on by individuals when they choose to go to postsecondary, and I don't think that anybody is asking that postsecondary should be completely free at this point for any individual seeking it. Certainly, I think that most students go to postsecondary expecting to take on some costs and perhaps, if they don't have family support to pay for it, expecting to take on some level of maybe personal debt. But we don't need to make it more difficult, we don't need to make it onerous, and we don't need to make it crippling.

I'm particularly struck by the students who have already entered into fields of study, who have committed themselves in some respects to taking on a four-year program. If you're going into law school or med school, you're looking at seven years, you know, and you're looking at residencies and articling. It's an extreme investment of your life. To find out midway through, as many students currently will and currently have, that suddenly the very program that they're in is now unaffordable for them and to have leave midstream – the question is: where are those young people going to go? We know that this government hasn't created any jobs. Certainly, to say that they're simply now going to not be able to afford to complete their program – I'm really concerned for those young people. I know that a lot of them actually live in my riding. A lot of families within my riding certainly can and do support their adult children when they can, but even with some family support it is an expensive endeavour to go into postsecondary.

Now this government is simply saying: take on more. Essentially, the lesson and the message that I'm actually hearing from this government is: if you can't afford it, don't take it. I don't think that that as government policy actually serves our province well. It certainly does not serve us to have individuals who haven't completed their postsecondary, who can't access postsecondary. It certainly does not serve our economy well. It doesn't help us to actually invest in the future.

We're seeing a strategic and intentional attack on education, whether it be for a young child or up to postsecondary. To what end, Mr. Chair? That's what I ask this government: to what end? All we're going to do is pay the price for that. I'm deeply disappointed to see that this government does not invest in education in any form, from young children up to postsecondary, and it seems to take a very short-sighted view of their role as government.

Government's job is actually to invest in the long-term health of the province, not to score cheap political points, not to call out every

organization and entity which disagrees with their approach and label them as enemies, whether it be professors, whether it be academic institutions, whether it be postsecondaries. We're seeing that approach. They've attacked our school boards. They're attacking child care providers. They're attacking – well, frankly, even Moody's now, apparently, is a target of this government. I think it's again a very short-sighted view of our province but also of their role as government.

I'm deeply disappointed by Bill 21 and its attack on postsecondary. I thank you for the time, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak.

9:40

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity this evening to rise and speak to Bill 21. I've had a lot of enjoyment listening to speakers so far this evening who have brought forward many, many cogent arguments and brought new issues to light with respect to the consequences of implementing Bill 21. One might ask if it was necessary at all. Was this legislation necessary? One heard predictions of the UCP prior to the last election as to what their fiscal program might actually end up being like, in particular one I'm reminded of from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul when he famously said, about the UCP's upcoming election platform and budget, prior to the election: it's going to hurt. Indeed, that prognosis has come to light, but it does beg the question: was it necessary? I say the answer is no. It wasn't necessary.

I think that if you look at the simple framework of the budgetary proposals by the government and the now opposition NDP, one will see perhaps some light as to why the government decided to go with an austerity budget. Now, the difference between the two as far as their end goals or where they end up at the end of their first term is very small. There are quite a few similarities. For example, if you look at the two proposals, the NDP proposal would have ended up with a balanced budget about one year later than the UCP fiscal plan, with about \$2 billion more in debt, yet the NDP proposal would not have contemplated any of these horrific reductions in social services that this UCP has now foisted upon the Alberta population.

We're fleshing out the consequences of this by debating Bill 21 and Bill 20 tonight. I think it's pretty clear, in my view, that the pain that's being caused by this Bill 21 and the measures in the UCP budget that go beyond Bill 21 was totally unnecessary. It begs the question: why? Why did they decide to make it hurt when it was really so totally unnecessary and they're arriving at a similar location when it comes to balancing-the-budget time frame and the amount of debt at the end of one term? The only answer that I can come up with, Mr. Chair, is that it's totally political, that the UCP decided to do it as a measure of creating their own particular form of chaos, and it turns people against each other. That's what they wanted to do, reward their proponents, reward their supporters, and punish those who would oppose them, although there seem to be large exceptions to that, in and of itself. I question their motivations. I don't understand.

For example, when we look at the small-town policing measures, which are really quite current today, where it's been announced, as part of Bill 21's regulations, that the cost of small-town, rural policing – a new funding model will force them to raise taxes. Now, this government is very proud to claim that it's the champion of rural Alberta and that they're the only ones who listen to rural Alberta, yet the small-town mayors, who are those that will be suffering the costs of policing, which they didn't have to do before this government came into power, are quoted in the *Star* today as

saying that they will end up having to raise taxes to pay for these 500 more RCMP constables that the Minister of Justice announced today.

I'm wondering what in the world small-town mayors are thinking about now when it comes to the attitude that this government is displaying towards rural municipalities and forcing them, those with populations under 5,000, to now become responsible for paying for their policing costs. These communities, according to the *Star* article, which I will table at the next opportunity, Mr. Chair, will start paying 10 per cent of their policing costs next year, 15 per cent in 2021, 20 per cent in 2022, and 30 per cent in 2023. Mel Smith, the mayor of Redwater, is saying: "It's going to have to be made up someplace, and we don't believe we have enough services that we could cut to cover it. So taxes and utilities have to go up to cover it." That's what the Redwater mayor, Mel Smith, has said. He said that the costs will equate to about \$262,000 a year by 2023 for his town of 2,300 residents northeast of Edmonton. That means a 10 per cent tax hike to residents, to ratepayers in the town of Redwater. "It's troublesome," Mr. Smith said. "They're just downloading . . . None of the small communities can afford it."

According to the mayor of Redwater, he really feels abandoned by this government, one who championed themselves as the defenders of rural Alberta and small communities. Yet the government has chosen to download these costs, saying: "Yes, indeed, we're going to get you the rural policing needs and requirements that you've been talking about. We've been listening to you. We consulted with you. Here are 500 police officers. Oh, by the way, here's the bill." That, indeed, is sort of a bait-and-switch kind of proposal, if you ask me.

I think that all rural municipalities probably are sharing the sentiments of the mayor of Redwater when they look at what in the heck just happened in the government's response to their pleas for more rural policing supports: "Sure, you can have more police, but you're going to pay for them yourself." Out of that tax base, rural communities are going to have to come up with the dollars, in escalating amounts over the next few years, to pay for these police that they've been promised by this Justice minister in response to crime rates that they wish to significantly reduce and control.

Every small town in rural Alberta has difficulties, and we wonder or I wonder particularly about how this is going to help small towns collaborate in their efforts to look at the services they offer their citizens and find a means of synergistically putting things together in a co-operative way, because that's what's necessary on a regional basis in rural Alberta to make sure that these smaller towns and farming communities can survive over the long term. This downloading of costs for rural policing onto Alberta's rural communities seems to be part of a pattern or a theme of making sure that collaboration can't happen, because what, in fact, has happened on top of this Bill 21, one element of which is the downloading of these policing costs, is also an element of added costs to small-town communities, in that they don't have the opportunity to adjust services to find the money to pay for these extra costs.

The downloading is being done really in an effort to help the race to the bottom that the government seems to want the communities to engage in by, for example, allowing them, in other measures that they've introduced, to compete taxwise. So they can offer tax incentives to industry and businesses to locate in their town versus the town next door, and that indeed, of course, limits their tax base. Now, on top of having to compete with each other for investment in their communities, they're being told that they have to come up with a significant amount of cash, up to a 10 per cent tax hike for the town of Redwater, in order to pay for police, which heretofore

have been covered by the province. This sleight of hand by the province is not something that's appreciated by these rural communities.

9:50

That's also something that Wally Yachimetz, the mayor of Calmar, adds his voice to, in the same article in the *Star*, where he talks about a town of 2,200 southwest of Edmonton, a town I'm also familiar with. He said that the added costs will mean a reduction of services. Thank you very much to the government. We're going to get a couple of more police officers in Calmar, but it's going to mean that something else is going to go. He goes on to say:

"More than likely there's going to be an increase (in taxes). Unfortunately, it's going to be passed along to the rate payer," Yachimetz said.

He said by the time Calmar is paying 30 per cent in 2023, the town might have to consider launching its own police service like Taber, Camrose and Lacombe.

Perhaps that's what the government wants to do overall, create a situation where the RCMP in Alberta, with their proud history in this province, somehow get squeezed out. I know this trial balloon has been floated before in the province, about getting rid of the RCMP in Alberta and perhaps forming our own police force, but it met with large opposition. I caution the government members to be pretty careful when playing around with the RCMP and their proud tradition of service in Alberta.

I happen to be familiar with many RCMP constables. My sister is the proud spouse of a retired RCMP constable who for 25 years served proudly across Canada, and through his career I watched the high level of respect and the integrity that they had in serving their communities, particularly in small towns where sometimes they were the only officer on duty in the dead of night, doing their job. There's a great deal of respect and collegiality between not only the administrators of these small communities and the RCMP who provided policing services but also the townspeople. They would rotate in and out; they wouldn't be there for a huge number of years. But I know all the postings that my brother-in-law had in small-town Alberta: in Mayerthorpe, for example, for a few years and in Stony Plain for a while, at the airport. Those relationships were long-lasting and still exist with communities that he used to be posted at. They mean a lot to townspeople, who have a lot of respect for the long tradition and the dignity of the RCMP and their police service.

If we end up with more and more smaller towns, as suggested by the mayor of Calmar, finding that it's more cost-effective or that they just don't have any choice – it is a cheaper alternative, and they can't afford it otherwise because their tax base won't support it – except to go with a small-town police force, I think that indeed, by a method that perhaps Albertans hadn't contemplated, this government is starting to push the RCMP out of policing in Alberta and somehow diminishing them in the eyes of Albertans. I think what they're trying to do is to build a case to get rid of the RCMP in Alberta and implement a provincial police force in the province.

I think we'd better have a conversation about that. I know that the government wants Albertans to talk about this proposal, and I hope that they do loudly and clearly tell them that we're proud of the RCMP in this province, that we want them to remain as our police force. I mean, 30 per cent of that money is coming from the federal government, and all that infrastructure, all the, I guess, compounded abilities of the RCMP, because they are a national police force, with tremendous resources and economies of scale – we shouldn't be dispensing with them lightly. It concerns me a lot that this government seems to be on track to promoting the creation of a provincial police force when, in fact, there is a large degree of

support embedded in Alberta for the RCMP and their policing efforts in rural Alberta. So a caution there.

I also want to speak a little bit about the difficulty and the long-standing efforts of small communities to maintain a rural doctor, a country doctor. I have spoken in this House before about the efforts of my grandparents, my grandmother in Thorhild in particular, who was a village councillor and the deputy mayor there, to keep a country doctor in town or actually to attract another one after one had left. I know that they actually bought the house that the doctor had resided in and had a clinic in in an effort to maintain it and rent it out to, hopefully, a new doctor.

Also, as an added bonus, what they tried to do, because this is what they heard a doctor would be attracted to, was that they brought in an X-ray machine to be put in the basement of that house as well. I actually was one of those individuals in my father's pickup truck going to Clyde, Alberta, to pick up this old X-ray machine from, actually, a veterinary office in Clyde, to take it, with my grandfather and father, to the country doctor's home and get it set up in the basement of that house so it would be part of a clinic that would attract a doctor. In fact, that actually ended up working. I'm not sure how we got that X-ray machine onto the truck – it was a pretty heavy machine – and down into the basement, but we managed it. That country doctor used that X-ray machine to great advantage in Thorhild for a number of years. That's the type of singular effort that village people and townspeople in rural Alberta will go to to attract a country doctor.

One of the things that the government is doing in an effort to get more family doctors to choose to practise in rural Alberta is using the practitioners' ID to dictate where new graduates might practise. It is something that we heard loud and clear as the ND opposition delegation, who heard from a number of student doctors, MDs, about to come to enter the practice of medicine in this province from the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. We heard loud and clear that they thought this was a terrible move and that there was a much better way of going about attracting doctors to practise in rural Alberta, using an incentive program rather than a dictatorial program. Many spoke about how when they did finally graduate and were going to enter into practice in Alberta, they weren't young students. They were people with families and spouses and houses. Getting the demand that they relocate to a rural location in order for them to get their practice IDs, the numbers which they need to practise, is something which has given them great pause. They are looking at potentially going to practise outside of the province rather than be told that they have to go to a rural practice.

Now, this isn't because some of them really dislike rural practices. They have perhaps spouses with a professional career going on, and they're in the middle of it, and they may be in an urban centre. It would be totally ridiculously costly for them to uproot and leave that other spouse's career behind to enable them to follow the dictates of the government and practise in a rural location. There can be parental issues, where there are elderly parents who are in a municipal area that the newly minted graduate doctor wants to practise in so that they can look after elderly parents. This would destroy the ability to do that, and consequently many were thinking: okay, I may not be able to practise in Alberta. There are situations where the practitioner just simply grew up in Edmonton or Calgary or Red Deer and wants to serve the community they grew up in as well.

There are also situations where an existing practitioner wants to sell their practice and they're now faced with a limited market.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak.

10:00

Ms Ganley: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have had the opportunity to speak to this bill before and made comments on many sections of it. I actually think it's interesting that I remain having more to say about it, mostly because this is a bill that in my view ought to have been many, many more bills than just one bill. It touches on such a broad breadth of different things, seemingly unrelated. I have had the opportunity to speak about increases to tuition in public education, which I think is definitely a concern. I've had the opportunity also to speak about sort of some of the health things, some of the impacts to benefits for seniors and for the disabled.

I'd like to speak about policing, which I will raise again, but I'd like now to speak a little bit about the changes to the Employment Standards Code. I suspect – and many of my colleagues have commented on this as well, but I think it's worth putting on the record – that one of the things that this bill deals with in its section 6 is amendments to the Employment Standards Code. One of the things it does is allow cabinet, by way of regulation, to alter the definition of an employee. It doesn't really sound like a big deal, but actually it has massive consequences for the population because in order to get access to a lot of the things under the Employment Standards Code, in order to get access to the right to severance, to the right to be paid for your work, to access the Employment Standards office to complain if you haven't been paid your overtime or you haven't been paid your severance or you haven't been paid your vacation pay, you need to be an employee.

Allowing cabinet to alter the definition of employee by way of regulation means that they can exclude people from those rights; entire categories of people can be excluded from those rights. I think that that is a pretty big deal.

Certainly, we saw that happening actually just today with another bill, with Bill 26, a similar move to exclude people from the operation of the Employment Standards Code. What that does, practically, for a lot of employees when they're put out of reach of the Employment Standards Code, is that it kind of removes the ability for them to get paid. That's a bit of a concern to me because a pretty fundamental principle that we all share, I would say, on both sides of the House in this place is a view that people ought to be remunerated for their work. We may disagree about what the minimum wage should be and what the impact of minimum wage policy is, owing, I think, to our rather different views of trickle-down economics, but I think we all agree that if someone works, they should be paid. In fact, I think the principle that we should be able to force people to work and to not pay them, well, there's a name for that. I can't really say it here, but I think that that should be a big concern for all of us, the idea of people working without getting paid.

I just wanted to highlight that this ability for cabinet to exclude people from being employees, to basically exclude them from the operation of the Employment Standards Code, is a huge concern. Yes, I think we discussed that at length yesterday, so perhaps I won't go on in detail, but I did want to get it on the record.

One of the other things that I'd like to comment on are some of the changes to policing. It's actually interesting. In this bill cabinet is given the ability to alter the way a rural community is paid for policing. In fact, there were all sorts of rumours circulating because the government had circulated documents saying that up to 70 per cent of the costs would now be borne by rural municipalities. It wasn't really clear what was going to happen with that.

Today we have heard an announcement from the Minister of Justice, also the Member for Calgary-Elbow. In the spirit of the awards given out earlier by the Speaker's office, I must say he deserves the award for best magic trick: making municipal residents' money disappear. I think you know that portion is definitely a concern, particularly in light of the fact that the government has gone on and on about these wasteful municipalities, that they're wasting money, blah, blah, blah, and then they foist \$200 million in costs onto them that they have to recoup from their population, therefore forcing them to raise municipal taxes. Essentially, the Minister of Justice raised taxes on rural residents and then will point and laugh at the municipal councillors who are involved. I think that's just a bit disingenuous, perhaps.

Another section that concerns me, particularly being a resident of Calgary, is changes to section 13. In fact, on that I have an amendment to propose, so I will hand that over and wait for it to reach the table before I continue.

The Deputy Chair: If the hon. member would please read it into the record. Going forward this amendment, for the benefit of the House, will be referred to as amendment A5. Please continue.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I propose on behalf of my hon. colleague from Calgary-*Buffalo* that Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, be amended by striking out the proposed sections 13(1) and 13(2). What this does is that it removes a section of the bill and what the bill does. The sections we're removing are 13(1) and 13(2). Section 13(1) reads: "The Provincial Offences Procedure Act is amended by this section." Section 13(2) reads: "Section 14(3) is amended by adding 'or to fund programs that support or improve the administration of justice or government initiatives' after 'arising under any enactment'."

It doesn't sound like much, but what it actually does is – so currently when municipalities give out tickets to individuals who are speeding, it's usually enforced by way of police. Those police regulate how those tickets can be given out. They're responsible for safety planning and ensuring that those things are done in the right way. They get the majority of that revenue because they are doing the work of the enforcement and the safety, which is fair.

The provincial government has always taken a share of that revenue. That share was, as outlined in this section, "to offset the expenses incurred by the Crown with respect to the collecting of penalties, fines, sums of money or forfeitures arising under any enactment." Essentially, they were allowed to keep some portion of that because the courts are used as the enforcement mechanism, so they have to have justices of the peace and prosecutors and all that sort of thing to take care of these offences. They were able to retain a certain portion of this.

Interestingly, this had actually changed under the previous Conservative government just before we came in. Historically, the province had taken 16.67 per cent – I know, weird number; I didn't come up with it – of the ticket revenue. Then the Conservatives who were in shortly before we arrived had sort of built into changes in the budget that the ticket prices themselves would increase. So everyone would pay more for the same amount of speeding, if that can be defined in that way, and the provincial government would retain 26.67 per cent, an additional 10 per cent, which actually didn't make a huge amount of difference to municipalities because the ticket prices had gone up so much that the amount of revenue for the same sort of general amount of catching of speeders or catching of other people violating laws in that way remained the same. That amount of police funding flowing to municipalities stayed the same because even though the provincial government

was taking a little bit more, the pie had grown as a result of the increase in fines.

10:10

Now what we see is that they're taking it even further; we're going from 26.67 per cent of fine revenue to 40 per cent. That is a significant increase, especially when you consider the history of this matter, and there's no corresponding increase in terms of the ticket revenue. What this means is that municipalities will get less. That money: it has certainly always been my understanding the entire time I was in government that that was police funding. We considered it when we calculated how much we fund police throughout the province. That money was included. When we calculated how much we funded each municipality, when we calculated how much we were giving for police, that money was included. In fact, for an urban municipality, like, for instance, Calgary or Edmonton, that money constitutes a very significant proportion of the funding that the province gives to municipalities to support policing. This is a significant cut. In fact, our chief of police in Calgary, again from my experience because it's where I live, has indicated that this will result in 130 fewer positions.

I think that's a big concern because it's actually my view – we've had this conversation a lot in this House. I know the Minister of Justice doesn't like statistics or doesn't think that they're accurate or reflective, which is his right, I suppose, but we had seen in 2017 crime rates rising in rural municipalities. We had therefore taken steps to implement a rural crime reduction strategy, and that strategy was having an effect. We were seeing some comedown. Now, of course, when you're talking about numbers that cover the entire province, that won't speak to everyone's individual experience – of course it won't – because, you know, that reduction will not be evenly spread over the province, so some areas will be differently affected.

Well, it was my view, you know, shortly before we left government, and I suspect the minister still has access to these numbers, that actually there were concerns with crime beginning to increase in cities as well, and I think we're going to see that come out in the statistics. I don't know yet because the statistics, especially like the good, centralized ones from the government, tend to have a lag time. We don't have those numbers yet, so we don't know yet what those numbers will be, but certainly the word from people around in the city, the word from people I've talked to, is that there are concerns. In Calgary, certainly, my hon. colleague from Calgary-McCall has raised with me multiple times that there are huge concerns about gangs and gun violence in his area of the city.

I think it's a problem, and I think that this is not a great time to be cutting police funding, particularly when we're cutting that funding to basically create a slush fund, because what this does, by saying "or government initiatives," is that it takes away any collars on what that money can be used for. There's no longer a restriction on what that money can be used for. It can just be used for anything. So money that was previously earmarked for policing can now – you know, it's taken from municipalities, and it can now be spent on anything.

That's a big concern. That is the reason that I am moving this amendment. I think that section is a concern to me. I think it's a concern to some other folks. With that, I will simply urge all members to vote in favour of the amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen on amendment A5.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise not just on behalf of myself as the Minister of Municipal Affairs but also on behalf of my colleague the Hon. Doug Schweitzer, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

An Hon. Member: Name. No.

Mr. Madu: My apologies. I apologize, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, obviously I will be opposing this amendment. The simple reason is that, you know, we have heard a lot of submissions from the members opposite that this is a direct cut to police funding by the government. Let's be clear. It is not all municipalities that fund their police services from this particular source of revenue. If one or two municipalities out there decide to base their entire or a large portion of their police funding on a source of revenue that they know they are not entirely responsible for or own, whilst I understand those concerns, the truth of the matter is that just as we are responsible for our own budget, municipalities are responsible for their own budgets as well. This is a case where, you know, we have 341 municipalities across this province, and you can just count a couple that use this source of revenue to fund their police services.

I am optimistic and hopeful as the Minister of Municipal Affairs that our municipal partners will be able to find the revenue to be able to fund police, especially given the fact that the provincial government has not reduced by one penny the police grants that we provide to our municipalities. We have always been clear. Any time I hear that a politician wants to go to essential services as the first place to go to for a cut – let's be clear – that right there is a political statement. I mean, it has nothing to do with so much of the issue at stake.

We have been going through a difficult time in this province. We are asking all of us to look inwards for efficiencies. For me, you know, it is frustrating to hear some of our municipal partners resort to, as a first response, that we are going to cut funding for policing or fire services or front-line workers. That in itself tells me that there is something much more that they are pursuing rather than wanting a truthful and transparent and blunt conversation about the issue at stake.

Again, to be brief, this is not an amendment I am prepared to support. I am sure that if the Minister of Justice were here, he would not support this amendment either. So on that particular business I am going to urge all of my colleagues to vote down this amendment. We will be prepared to continue this conversation with our municipal partners as to how best we fund all of the core and priority services that the people of this province rely on. Mr. Chair, I urge the members of this House to vote down this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

On amendment A5, do I see any other members wishing to speak? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to Bill 21, are there any members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

10:20

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure once again to rise to speak to the bill, Bill 21. Just reading today's newspaper, as opposed to what the hon. minister has quoted through you, these small communities are reacting.

This bill is proposing downloading the cost of policing. This question has been raised many times by my fellow members, and the government members keep denying that this information is true. Looking at the *Star* newspaper today, it's not only one community; it's a number of communities. The mayors from Redwater, Calmar, Bon Accord, and a number of those other communities, small communities, you know, are denying the facts of the information. The government members have been claiming for days and months that the information is not true, that small communities will not be picking up the cost of the increased policing.

This is more concerning as this was one of the key promises by the governing party during the election. They ran an election on, you know, controlling crime in rural communities, and just seven months later it seems like they have forgotten their promise. You can call this promise made, promise broken. In small communities mostly in the of 2,000 to 3,000, 3,500 range in population, the mayors state that the communities will shut services to compensate the policing. That is not the option for many small communities as they don't have many services they can choose from to pay for the policing. The mayor said that the community will be bearing the cost: 10 per cent next year, 15 per cent after that, 20 per cent after that, and then about 30 per cent by 2023. This is quite a big cost for communities with a population of 2,000 members. That is something I understand, that the government members really understand, that this is indeed quite a heavy cost for those small communities, and that's probably why every time the question was raised, they were reiterating that this is not true information. This is quite a concerning move that cannot be supported and is itself one of the biggest reasons why we are opposing the bill.

I tried not to be so biased. So many of my colleagues have, you know, shared the concerns that we are hearing from our constituents and not only in our ridings. Many members from other parts of the province – and you will probably hear more when you go back home this week or after this week. People are concerned. People are really concerned. The Member for St. Albert shared some of the stories. The purpose of sharing those stories is to bring the feedback that we're hearing from people, sharing the experiences that we are having, the chance to meet people, the chance to do the job that we were assigned seven months ago to do.

I just wanted to share my experience. I was one of the members selected by the LAO to participate with my colleague the Member for Calgary-Glenmore in the Westminster parliamentary procedures and process. One of the key factors that we both really were, you know, engaged in: how to make the parliamentary system more effective; what mechanisms you could use to serve the people of your jurisdiction better, to make this world better for all. That is something we were discussing there even from, you know, the different spectrums, the different stripes of the politics we were from. Every time we're sharing the stories, that is the purpose. We expect – like, the government has resources – that they would have done their homework on this when they proposed these changes. Even after that – we're trying to bring those experiences, that first-hand information – they're moving forward to pass these bills when the members are aware what kind of effects they're going to make on communities.

When we were talking about deindexing the AISH benefits, it's not really fear and smear. This is not really to pick one individual. This is to share the concern that this is the wrong path we are choosing. We are open-hearted on so many other things when it comes to spending billions of dollars. The companies, we know – there in the newspaper today, last week, before that – have taken the benefits of millions of dollars. Let's say that the government

members honestly believe that one day that will have the better outcome, but in this case we understand the effects of inflation. The government never claimed that they have, you know, developed the mechanism or formula to control inflation, that Alberta will not, you know, experience inflation going forward. So deindexing anything has adverse effects on the people that it's related to.

In this case all those people we're talking about are the most vulnerable communities. Those are special-needs people, the people on AISH, the seniors. And these days it's not even possible for seniors without family – I will not say, like, every senior probably, but I will generalize. In most cases seniors don't really live luxury lives. The people on AISH: you know, my colleague literally read a letter from someone about how they are budgeting their month. Basically, we were so confident. We had a plan that was going to balance the budget. We had a plan that was going to pay the debt. We had a plan that was going to create jobs. I don't know why we are so – I don't know which word I should pick. We are going after \$20, we're going after \$30 on those very people. There are some of the changes, you know, that I have to learn even. Henson trust funds. What are we trying to achieve by attacking those people?

10:30

I'm not really up here to make a political speech. I'm really concerned. If somebody has a background so that you can explain it, I'm willing to listen, I'm willing to participate, I'm willing to compromise on behalf of my constituents, but this does not seem to be a fair path that we are going to take. It's a wrong example that we're setting when we're claiming that we have a plan to do better. This is not something to do better. This is something very small, I understand, but those are very vulnerable communities. It's the wrong example. Please look back and think about it, the impact this is going to have. This will make their life harder.

For the members of those communities, it's not even possible to live independently on the fixed income that they're limited to. I dealt with seniors. I'm dealing with seniors. Currently I'm dealing with cases where those people, you know, are looking to move to seniors' homes, lodges. The approximate cost of those facilities: that starts around \$2,000, \$2,100. That is the minimum cost. That's where they start from. The majority of those people don't make that.

If we are not able to address AISH in this tough time, I would think the government member would say: "Not this year; probably next year. Yes, these are the communities in our focus. We will make this place better for everyone." But this is not the case. That is why every time, when it comes to speaking to these bills, unfortunately, we have to speak against these bills.

There is something else related to the doctors. I will leave it at this time. The president of the AMA has written a letter. I have the letter, so I will not go in depth on this. This is something constitutionally wrong that they're trying to do, that the government will have the power not to honour the legal agreement, that they can break the legal agreement. The president had clearly written: what, then, does it mean to have the agreement if this can be broken any time you want? It's creating uncertainty. It's not encouraging the people to look at Alberta as the best place to work in.

They are concerned about rising tuition costs, 23 per cent over four years. That's quite a bit. Specifically, when we're going through the time the number of people who have graduated – I know recently among these folks one who has given up. He's moved to somewhere in Europe. He was not going to find a job. He graduated in chemical engineering from the U of A under heavy debt. He waited two years, didn't find a job, and moved. I know another

person, you know, being under so much stress, who was lucky to find a job with the city. It's not in his field, but at least he has a job to do.

We are even seeing the trend where our relationship with the cities is not even on the right path. The cities are concerned that the government is changing their charters and that, by the move, they're gaining the power where they will end up probably cancelling and delaying their major projects. The fellow who got a job with the city may end up losing his job because, you know, you are trying to change the funding models to the cities.

So there are a number of things. I can go into details, like, one by one. I can spend lots of time even on each topic being addressed in this omnibus bill, but I wanted to say that it is not doing any better for anyone. The people who are giving us feedback: they are not only the people that voted for us. They are the people who voted for us; they are the people who did not vote for us. They are the people who even voted for the UCP in the past election. The people that are speaking out: I know you will listen, and I hope that it will not be too late by the time you listen.

It's my honour to rise in the House on behalf of my constituents to raise their concerns and to raise the concerns of the Albertans we heard, and with these comments, I'd just close my remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen to speak.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to stand tonight to share some of my thoughts and remarks on Bill 21, an omnibus piece of legislation that makes a huge number of changes on a number of different topics, pieces of legislation, creates new legislation, new acts within it, and does it across a lot of pages. I am going to try and focus some of my comments at this time to areas that touch on my critic portfolio of Labour and Immigration, but if I do have some additional time as I'm thinking of things this evening, I may also speak to some of the larger issues. Within Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, there are some very large, sweeping changes that impact the collective bargaining process, that impact the rights and protections that are afforded to employees in this province and make changes to those rights and to those employees.

I'll start, Mr. Chair, by referring to the employment standards section, which is part 6 of this act, Bill 21. What the Employment Standards Code changes do is that they give the government the ability to exclude classes of individuals through regulation from being considered an employee. Now, within the Employment Standards Code, when we talk about employment standards, we are talking about the minimum employment standards protections available to workers. What seems to be the general view across Canada is that employment standards are considered that floor, the minimum protections from which all employees should benefit.

Even today in our regulations supporting the Employment Standards Code there are some exclusions, accommodations for particular industries. I would note that in Alberta those exclusions have not been reviewed in quite some time, and that was something that I certainly have spoken to the current minister of labour about in my hope that they will review that. This government should be considering employment standards, occupational health and safety, the Labour Relations Code, all of the legal frameworks that protect the rights of workers and, particularly, vulnerable workers. Rather than giving themselves the power to exclude classes of workers from those protections through Bill 26, which we have recently seen

through this House, this government should be considering how to make sure that Alberta workers are protected, to make sure that Alberta workers are respected and are afforded the rights that all Canadian citizens are entitled to.

10:40

Unfortunately, Bill 21 is another move in the wrong direction because it allows this government to exclude entire classes of individuals from being considered employees. Now, if someone is not considered an employee, the potential impact of that is them not qualifying for employment standards protection. Now, I will mention that the current definition of an employee means "an individual employed to do work who receives or is entitled to wages and includes a former employee." In excluding entire classes of individuals from that definition, you are excluding classes of people from being entitled to wages. I have grave concerns about this. Now, I've reviewed the government's press releases. I've reviewed some of the government's press releases and statements throughout the course of debate through the various readings, and I have not heard a compelling argument for why entire classes of individuals would need to be excluded from the definition of employee in our Employment Standards Code, Mr. Chair. I would argue that this is a very concerning move from a government that has just recently excluded a large number of workers from basic protections, like the right to be paid, through Bill 26.

That is something that I would like to flag first and foremost, the changes in section 6 to employment standards, because it has far-reaching implications. The term "employee" is used throughout the legislation, so in changing through regulation who can fall under that category or not has massive impacts within this piece of legislation. I would submit to you, Mr. Chair, that a province and a workplace that is supportive of workers is also supportive of business. As you will hear from many business owners, many employers, they need their workers in order to prosper. I'm quite concerned about this.

I would also flag that employment standards are often relied upon by, particularly, vulnerable workers. Vulnerable workers can be considered as a number of different potential groups. That often includes new immigrants. Vulnerable workers often can include single parents, young workers. By not having that minimum floor of standards in our Employment Standards Code, the risk is that people will fall through the cracks. The risk is that people will perhaps not be paid wages and will not have any recourse because they will not have the benefits of the protections of employment standards.

I would encourage this government that, rather than finding ways to exclude people, they should be looking at the current exclusions and determining if they are appropriate or not. Given the age of this exclusion list as it stands today, it deserves thorough review and should be updated and modernized. I would mention that Alberta had roughly 85 per cent of workers covered by employment standards prior to Bill 26 passing. That percentage is likely lower. In Manitoba it is 90 per cent; in Ontario, 86 per cent. But Ontario has also started on a very deliberate process to try and include more workers in minimum employment standards protections. So right there is a big concern for me in Bill 21.

The second area that I want to mention is the changes to the Labour Relations Code. These changes directly impact the collective bargaining process, particularly under essential services agreements. Mr. Chair, essential services agreements give public-sector employees that right to strike, which had been removed from them, unconstitutionally, for many, many years. A recent Supreme Court ruling clarified that Albertans, Canadians have the right to collectively bargain, and that includes the right to strike through the

enabling legislation that we have. There are a number of steps and procedures. But these are important, fundamental rights as Canadians, and that right to collectively bargain is a fundamental human right as well, codified by the ILO and other major organizations.

Now, what this government has done is that when negotiating an essential services agreement, an employer will be able to choose to use replacement workers, or strikebreakers, versus negotiating an essential services agreement with the people who work in that facility or for that employer. I would posit that that is very problematic for a number of reasons. First off, when there is a collective bargaining dispute, there is a very large power imbalance between workers and employers. One of the only powers that workers have is the right to withhold their labour through collective bargaining action, through striking. By allowing replacement workers to come in, you're undermining workers' powers when they're already at a disadvantage.

I strongly feel that as Canadians we should be respecting the right to collectively bargain. We should be respecting that process, that has been developed over centuries, because I can tell you that when there wasn't a framework to help facilitate employers and workers negotiating, it was chaos. There were a lot of major actions that took place 100 years ago. In Winnipeg the strikes of 1919, as an example, brought the city to a grinding halt for a matter of weeks. That is not what we want to see, so respecting workers and respecting the collective bargaining process is important.

But bringing strikebreakers in has a known impact of escalating tensions when there is a strike or lockout and introduces workers unfamiliar with the work environment. When we're talking about where a strike or lockout might happen in a place where there is an essential services agreement – essential services agreements are required when the employer has determined that there is work that has to be done or there would be great damage to health, to buildings, to facilities. A power generator needs to have a certain level of work happening and cannot be allowed to fail even in the case of a strike or lockout. An essential services agreement makes sure that there are workers to do that work. A health care facility: making sure that there are enough minimum workers to care for the individuals in that health care facility is what an essential services agreement is supposed to help define. Now we are inviting strikebreakers into that environment – in the case of a health care facility, a seniors' home, perhaps – people unfamiliar with the work environment, and none of the existing employees will be there.

I can tell you that strikes and lockouts only come to pass after other avenues have been exhausted. I have never spoken to a worker who did not deeply care about the work that they do, the people that they serve, the work that is happening. Negotiating those essential services agreements is incredibly important, but bringing in replacement workers or strikebreakers to perform the work of those employees who are out on the picket lines because they've been locked out or because they've chosen to go on strike is going to escalate, is going to extend the length of these disputes and removes power away from the workers in a situation where there's already a power imbalance. I strongly disagree with the changes that are happening here in the Labour Relations Code.

Now, in section 14, the Public Sector Employers Act, there are changes here that actually limit the notice of termination and severance pay that employees are entitled to, capping what a long-term employee would have the right to should they be terminated. We are talking about employees who may have worked as public servants in our government for long periods of time. The Public Sector Employers Act section is talking about limiting, capping the severance pay and changing what will happen should someone who has collected the severance find new employment in the Alberta

public agencies again, including a new repayment section if someone has been terminated.

I think this is a piece of Bill 21 – there are many pieces, Mr. Chair – that has not received enough consideration through the debate, and part of that is simply because we are dealing with an omnibus piece of legislation with so many moving parts in it. I will say again that I have gone specifically to look at the government information about this bill, how this government is communicating the changes to the general public, and I find it completely lacking in detail, making it very hard for the average Albertan to understand what this bill is doing and what impact that will have on them in their working environment.

10:50

I've raised three concerns so far: loopholes and exemptions to those minimum employment standards; the power imbalance that already exists when dealing with conflict between workers and employers and the fact that adding replacement workers into the essential services agreements further shifts that power balance; and limiting the severance pay for long-term public servants who may find themselves without a job. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that there are a lot of public servants who are quite concerned about their jobs under Budget 2019 and the language that they hear coming from this government, the letters that are being sent out to unions. We've seen a lot of those workers express their concerns through information pickets, by gathering together on the front steps of the Legislature. I certainly hope that this government is getting the sense of how strong those concerns are.

I will continue talking about part 16, the Public Service Employee Relations Act. In part 16 a number of workers are being denied collective bargaining rights, rights that were only just given to them in 2018 after much consultation. I would like to stress to you, Mr. Chair, that withdrawing or removing collective bargaining rights from groups of workers in Canada has been deemed unconstitutional in many different court decisions. It's something that any government should do very, very cautiously.

But this government seems to be doing it fairly regularly and without, in my view, enough consideration. I have not heard from the government any good reason why these classes of workers are being removed from having collective bargaining rights, something that they are entitled to through Canadian human rights, something that fundamentally the International Labour Organization and labour standards across the world suggest should be granted to all workers. But here on page 51 we are removing the collective bargaining rights from entire classes of workers again. I am in strong disagreement with that and have not heard from this government what possible justification there would be for removing those workers from that section.

Part 16, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, starts to again talk about the collective bargaining process. I have to repeat that the collective bargaining process is a right that workers have, the right to work together to negotiate as part of correcting or accommodating the imbalance of power between employers and employees. It's something that as Canadians we have said that we value, by including it in our founding, most principal documents.

Here in this section specifically, giving new powers to the minister to issue directives to employers that they must follow before, during, and after engaging in collective bargaining: now, my concerns here are not fundamentally with the minister giving directions to employers. Rather, my concern is that we are talking about essentially secret directions. It doesn't say "secret." I believe "confidential" is the language term in here. There has been case law dealing with whether partners, particularly employers at the bargaining table, can withhold certain information in the context of

bargaining. So my question to the government would be: are we certain that this will stand up should workers choose to challenge the ability of the employer to have confidential or secret information influencing the collective bargaining process?

As I understand it, in a collective bargaining situation both parties need to come together in good faith to negotiate and to find that agreement. It's a system that Canadians, Albertans, workers, and employers should all respect, and here we have the government giving itself new powers of confidential data, confidential orders. If I'm not mistaken, I've seen in this section that the minister's orders can be changed during collective bargaining. I would appreciate any clarification on that section. That would be concerning because changing your bargaining position during the collective bargaining process has been deemed by the Labour Relations Board to be a bad-faith bargaining tactic in the past.

When we talk about what Bill 21 is doing to workers, there are a number of concerns that I have with this piece of legislation. On top of that would be the general concerns, that so many of my colleagues have very skilfully talked about, with changes like pausing the indexing for AISH, which my colleagues have rightfully described as a cut. The government objects to that language. I simply ask: to the AISH recipient, what is the difference between a pause and indexing being cancelled? Like, pause, cancel: it doesn't matter. When it comes to next year, the person on AISH is not going to get a cost-of-living increase while the price of goods and services will increase on that individual. We are talking about people who are surviving on very little money in this province.

The same pause has been given to the seniors' benefit, to the employment and income supports benefit. I just find the language of a pause versus cancelling to be meaningless when you are talking to the people who are receiving this money. We are calling it, rightfully, what it is, which is a cut, whereas if this change was not made, they would get more.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Do I see any other hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to move an amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. As the pages distribute this amendment, I would ask that you can start right now just by reading it into the record.

For the benefit of the House going forward, this amendment will be referred to in debate as A6.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to move an amendment to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I move that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 4 by striking out subsection 4(6); by adding the following after subsection (6):

Section 3.3 is amended

- (a) by striking out "section 3.2(1)(d)" and substituting "section 3.2";
- (b) in clause (b)(i), by striking out "Schedule 2" and substituting "the regulations";

and in subsection (7) by striking out clause (e).

Just, I guess, briefly, what we're trying to do, Mr. Chair, is to give this government one more opportunity to do the right thing as it relates to Henson trusts. We've already moved one amendment that was specific to Henson trusts. However, I believe it included another section on indexing.

However, this amendment is focused specifically on Henson trusts. I think it's really important to be very clear, for people with

disabilities that are watching – and there are some – and groups or advocacy groups that have worked for many years to have Henson trusts enshrined in the AISH Act, in legislation, that they know that we're giving this government one very clear opportunity to do the right thing and to preserve the ability to have Henson trusts enshrined in law so that it's not moved to regulation, so that it's not hidden away from this place, so that any changes that are made to this will be done in the full light of the day here in this Chamber as opposed to behind closed doors or simply by the minister's office or cabinet. This is very clear. This is a second opportunity for this government to stop, to think about what they're doing, and to make a change, to make a necessary change.

11:00

Some of the members are new, and we would have had these discussions in 2018, when we debated this in this place. It was actually, I think, a private member's bill that we debated to get this work done. I know one of the groups that the government likes to talk a lot about – and they've done some great work over the years – is Inclusion Alberta. I know that before they were called Inclusion Alberta, it was the Alberta association for community living. They were very active in pushing the government of the day – that would have been the Conservatives, and then it would have been our government, the New Democrats – to look at making these necessary changes. To be clear, before we made the changes, Alberta was the only province in Canada that didn't have this protection. It was a great day, actually, when this legislation passed in 2018 and these changes were made. I do believe it passed unanimously with all of the people that were here at the time.

Now suddenly it's a different story. Now, I know that, very much like with the cuts to AISH, the government likes to say that it's not a cut because, you know, it's deindexing. Whatever. It's a cut. The big question here is: why on earth would you mess around with this? I'm hoping the Premier is not laughing at what I'm saying about Henson trusts. What I am saying is that I don't understand that, and I really wish somebody would explain it to me and perhaps explain it to Albertans that are watching and explain it to advocacy groups that would like to know: why is it that this protection for a Henson trust is being moved from legislation into regulation? Why? What is the reason? For fun? I can't imagine that people that write this stuff enjoy writing it just for fun if there are no plans at all to change it.

Not once have I heard – now, I'll be straight; I haven't been here for every single hour of debate on this – of one minister or one government member explaining to anybody why this is being done other than: "There's nothing to see here. There's nothing cut. Don't worry about it. Everything will be just fine." Well, if that is the case, why would you do this? I would appreciate it, as would Albertans, if we had a straight answer instead of the same old tired talking points that don't say anything. They don't say anything. I think the mere fact that nobody is making eye contact would probably say something, too.

But let's move on. As you know, as I'm sure the government will know, Henson trusts are actually called Henson trusts because they come from a case in Ontario. The case was the Minister of Community and Social Services versus Henson. What this suit was about was protecting assets set aside for a disabled beneficiary so that those assets would not be used to compromise eligibility for government benefits. In this case it would be AISH, but in Ontario it is not. The Supreme Court actually later weighed in and for the first time addressed this issue and affirmed the essence of these trusts. Again, as I said, in 2018 Alberta finally joined the rest of the country by protecting these things.

If you can imagine for a moment that – and I'm sure some people in this Chamber do in fact have dependants or children that have disabilities that this would impact. For whatever reason they will be unable to work as they get older. For whatever reason AISH is how they're going to support themselves. As a parent, of course, you want to ensure that their future is secure. We've already been through this for hours tonight to understand that living on AISH is living in poverty. That's just a fact. It's a fact. Surviving on AISH is tough. It's living in poverty. So parents want to know that after they're gone, they can leave a trust that will be managed by a trustee that will assist that dependent adult or their child – it's always their child, I suppose, no matter how old they get – by supporting them with that trust and that that will not impact their benefits that they rely on to pay for rent, food, and all of those things.

You can imagine the comfort that it must be to parents to know that this is something that they can do to give themselves some peace of mind by knowing that their child is taken care of. If there is absolutely no intent whatsoever to make changes to this particular ability of parents to provide for their sons or daughters or dependants, to provide them with a trust, then I have no idea why the government would feel it is necessary to move it from the act into regulation other than that they have something planned. I mean, that's the only thing I can think of.

I can't think of why the government would move things like the definition of severe handicap or eligibility or anything about the benefits – I don't know why they would feel the need to take it out of the AISH Act and put it into regulation other than that there's something going on. I've seen your budget projections for the next few years, and I know that they're not going to meet the growth in intake. So there is something going on. For whatever reason this government is choosing to deflect, to put out information that is incorrect, that is misleading, and I just don't understand why somebody from the government won't stand up and explain this. You don't just represent the people that you believe voted for you or gave you your great big mandate. You do owe explanations to every single Albertan, particularly every single Albertan who is impacted by this change.

I've got a couple of examples that I'd like to share with you. There's a friend of mine who lives in St. Albert. His name is Eric. I won't share his last name. He and his wife had one child. Her name is Jan. Jan is probably in her 50s now. Jan was born with a fairly profound developmental disability. Eric lost his wife as well and has been methodically over the years – and he only had one child – planning for the time when he will no longer be around. He's the kind of dad who – his daughter doesn't live with him – calls her every night. He knows exactly what's going on in her life. They go on regular vacations. He has peace of mind knowing that he's worked very hard and saved very hard and invested where he could to know that whatever happens to her with AISH, whatever else, you know, you choose to do in the short term, he has set up this trust, and he knows that the trustee that he has assigned will take care of her future.

But now that future is in question and in jeopardy, and the government members, the Premier, the minister will not stand up and answer any questions. If you expect Albertans to actually believe that you're making these changes for no other reason than, you know, the goodness of your heart – who knows? – it just doesn't even make sense. It's actually a bit insulting that you would think that we don't understand what you're doing or that we don't see that path. We get it. We see you. We see exactly what you're doing.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, please, through the chair.

Ms Renaud: I'll speak through the chair. Absolutely.

You know, as we get near the end of this session, I've really been hopeful that somebody would have the courage, Mr. Chair – somebody – to stand up and own their decision and explain it, not hide behind talking points that don't mean anything to anybody except, I guess, the people that wrote them and the people that speak them every day. Just answer a simple question. This is, like, a life-or-death thing. This might not seem like it to these members over here, but it is a life-or-death thing. Can you imagine somebody knowing that they will not always be here to provide for their adult daughter or son or whatever the relationship is – they will not be around – and needing to know that that person will be cared for, that they will not go hungry, that they will not have to live with four roommates because they can't afford housing, that they will not have to go to the food bank, that they will have a future where maybe occasionally they can go to the gym and work out, maybe go on a vacation once a year, every other year? Who knows? That is peace of mind that is, like, life-and-death important, and this government won't even stand up and explain to us: why on earth did you shove this thing into an omnibus bill, that is a slap in the face to Albertans to begin with? Why will you not explain?

11:10

In fact, I don't even get why the members think it's kind of funny that I get so worked up about this. But you know what? I'm worked up because I represent a lot of people who are really worked up about this, and I would like an answer if you're going to vote this down for a second time. This is the second time we're giving you the chance to fix this, to fix this dangerous error.

If you go further and change this further, there will be legal action. I think Inclusion Alberta has even been fairly clear about that. So why not fix it? Why not eliminate the confusion, eliminate the risk, give people some peace of mind, and put it back. Do the right thing. The government is taking us backwards, Mr. Chair. They're taking us backwards in almost every area, from employment, the minimum wage, to tuition, everything that you can think of, and now this.

Once again, we will be the only province that doesn't have this protection. Why? The past wasn't that great. Let's go forward to the future. Let's make it better. Let's invest in people. Let's invest in families. This is ridiculous, it's insulting, it's dangerous, and you owe Albertans an explanation.

That's all I have to say about this. Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak? I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I won't spend a lot of time talking about this specific issue, but I did want to have a chance to rise on it because it is such an important issue on so many fronts.

You know, I first met the Member for St. Albert many years before she actually chose to run for us. She was an incredibly passionate advocate for people who had significant disabilities, and she was a courageous spokesperson for those people for years and years and years before she ever decided to get into politics. I first met her when the former PC government decided to try and cut roughly \$40 million to \$50 million away from PDD, and that advocate helped organize hundreds of people every Friday to come to the Legislature to protest the injustice of that decision. I know that she cares very deeply, and I know that when she talks about the insecurity and the fear that this change with respect to the status of Henson trusts creates in families whose loved ones are suffering from a significant disability, she speaks with nothing but genuine sincerity, and she brings to this House a sincerity that all members,

were they to listen, could learn from. I'm very, very proud that she is here to stand up for people with these challenges and their families here in Alberta, and I wish people understood the privilege that they have to learn from her.

Now, the fact of the matter is that what she is proposing is to try to fix the mistake, that the minister has very intentionally allowed to persevere within this bill, such that the integrity of these trusts is safe from subsequent decisions by this government to claw back money from people who are permanently and seriously disabled in terms of the AISH money that they receive. Let me tell you that it's all fine for the folks over there to say: "Oh, no, no. We didn't mean to take it out of the legislation. We'll protect these trusts by regulation." Well, of course, it begs the question: "Why would you do that?" Secondly, the fact of the matter is that security is such a fundamental issue in the lives of families who are all coming together to provide support to a loved one who suffers from a serious disability.

Now, I know that other speakers here have talked about what it's like as a parent in those first few days and months when you bring your baby home from the hospital, unless, of course, you've had the baby at home, which many of my friends have done, which I've always thought is a little weird. I mean, it's good for them, but it's always kind of scary. Nonetheless, you have your baby, and you watch your baby. Every moment of that baby's first few days, weeks, months, years you watch them. Are they developing normally? Are they looking at me? Are they moving the way they should move? Are they getting ready to stand up? Are they crawling? All those things new parents do with love. Frankly, that is sometimes the only time you ever experience that in your life. Those parents go through that period where they slowly start to learn that maybe their baby is actually going to be struggling with more serious challenges than just whether or not they get picked first for the soccer team at school and that, in fact, things aren't unfolding exactly the way they are. I don't know if anybody here has had that feeling. It is the most scary feeling as a parent that you can ever have, to watch that with your child and not sleep night after night wondering whether the future of your child, the one that you had always imagined for them is what they will have.

Maybe it's over a few days, maybe it's over a few months, maybe it's over a few years you may come to conclude that, in fact, your child's future is not going to be the one that you had anticipated when you first decided that you were going to have a family and that your child's future is going to be different than the future that you had planned. So then as a parent what you do is that you begin to plan for how to make sure that that future is as good as it can be. You start planning very early on, and you put money aside to make sure that that child will be protected when you're no longer there to protect them.

If anybody here has spent time with families who are caring for a child, a sibling, another relative who has a serious disability, you will know that those people are heroes. Their lives have been fundamentally and foundationally changed forever. They don't vacation anymore, they don't go out for coffee with their friends, they don't plan lovely gatherings with their neighbours on the weekend – why? – because they have changed their life to make sure that they are there for their loved one whenever it is necessary, and they do that because they love their loved one. Quite frankly, that's what happens in the majority of cases, and what that means is that they are doing that and as they do that, the rest of Albertans are not doing it because these people are caring for their loved ones, which, of course, I'm sure is the value that the members opposite think is so fundamentally important. And they do that.

But they also know that they won't be there forever. Every parent from the moment that the light goes off and they realize that the

future of their child is different, they begin to worry about what will happen when they're not there anymore. Even as they work ten times as hard at parenting or being a brother or a sister or an uncle or a niece or a nephew, even as they do that, so much more work, they also know that they won't always be there, so they plan for the future. They put this money aside, and they hope that it will be there to be just the smallest little bit of support for their loved one in their absence.

Let me give you some examples. Let's imagine for a moment that you have a severely autistic child, and that child actually becomes extremely comfortable living with their family, and they are able to actually secure an incredible quality of life. It's not what their family had hoped for them going forward, but they have a great quality of life. That family knows that when that family is gone, that child with autism is going to be brutally sad and broken when they are forced to live in a group home with five or six other people that don't understand who they are, what their routines are, what they need, what they like to do when they go out, all those kinds of things.

One of the things that people do with these trusts is that they use the money to make sure that there's a companion there, for instance, with that person who has a disability so that that person with the disability actually gets out into the community regularly, still gets to see and do the things that bring them joy in their life. Just as an example, that's what they do. This is about the care of these people. This is about the piece of mind of their loved ones who devote so much of their life to caring for them, and it in no way costs this government anything.

11:20

Now, what will cost this government in the long run is if they begin to nickel and dime people who are otherwise eligible for AISH because they don't in their heart think that those people should be allowed to live on \$1,600 or \$1,700 a month. And if they nickel and dime them such that those people become increasingly pressured, find themselves with fewer and fewer places to live, fewer and fewer types of food that they can afford, fewer and fewer winter jackets that they can afford to buy in the winter, fewer and fewer activities in the community that they can participate in, well, as that happens, slowly those people will become more marginalized, and ultimately they will cost all of us more both in terms of what we have done to our community as well as what we have done to them individually and what that means to where we will see them asking for support in other parts of what we do through government, whether it be in the health care system, the justice system, or otherwise. It doesn't help in the long term. It doesn't save money in the long term. What it also does is that it significantly hurts the hopes and dreams of many, many people who make courageous decisions to care for the people that they love most in the world. Security is such a critical part of these people's lives, knowing what they can plan for.

So if the plan is not to try and claw back this money from these families, who I've just described, why would you pass legislation that gives you the ability to do it? Don't tell us: oh, don't worry; we'll protect it in regulation. Come on. Give everybody some respect. Understand that they understand what's going on here. And if you're going to do it, come clean. If you're not going to do it because you think it's as cruel as it is, then accept this amendment and fix this so that those hundreds of thousands of families can sleep better at night. You know what? They put in 14, 16 hours a day caring for their loved ones. When they finally get to sleep, they should be able to sleep soundly. This bill is making sure that they will not. You have the ability to give them that sound sleep, or you can make them worry even more. That's your choice.

I thank the Member for St. Albert for trying so hard to give piece of mind back to these families, and I urge members of this Assembly to support her in that exceptionally worthwhile objective.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We are on amendment A6. Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:24 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Goehring	Nielsen	Shepherd

11:40

Against the motion:

Allard	Lovely	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Rutherford
Copping	Madu	Sawhney
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Panda	Stephan
Horner	Rehn	Toews
Issik	Reid	Walker
Kenney	Rosin	Wilson

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 30
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[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now moving back to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Are there any hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to rise again. I begin, of course, by expressing my profound disappointment, on behalf of the many families of people with severe disabilities in Alberta, at this government's failure to take the opportunity that the Member for St. Albert offered to them to adopt a more humane approach to supporting them in the work that they do to care for their loved ones.

You know, it's hardly surprising, honestly, because it is one small part of a bill which is troubling on a multitude of fronts. At the highest level this bill includes many, many attacks on the lives of Albertans and Alberta families in a number of different areas, and I will go through those to some degree. I know that many of my colleagues have, but certainly I, too, would like to have the opportunity to remind members opposite exactly what it is they are doing to the people of Alberta through the enactment of this bill. And to be clear, it is: to the people of Alberta. It is an attack on the people of Alberta. It is a difficult thing that is being done to the people of Alberta.

Just to put it in context, Mr. Chair, for each one of the cuts that are embedded in Bill 21, as I talk about them, it's important to examine them in the larger context: we are doing this so that we can give \$4.7 billion to exceptionally wealthy corporations. You know,

there's been a lot of work that's been done recently to sort of itemize where that \$4.7 billion is going. Over the course of the last few weeks we've seen a number of large corporations report on exactly how much they have banked themselves as a result of the generous corporate handout that this government has adopted and decided is necessary and that they have also decided Albertans need to pay for through a series of hardships, many of which are embedded in the bill that we are speaking to today.

Today I read an article about – I think it was a combination – Exxon and Chevron. Exxon and Chevron: you know, two long-standing Alberta companies. Oh, wait. Nope. Actually, they're American multinationals. Exxon and Chevron have just managed to bank collectively roughly \$670 million as a result of the corporate handout that this government thought was so critical to their economic plan, notwithstanding that we have seen jobs lost, not gained, since its monumental announcement.

You know, that is to be added up with the many other – well, not many other, actually. I think it actually adds up to about seven major American multinational companies that are getting a tremendous amount of money. A couple of Canadian ones, so good on that. CNRL, Suncor: two big companies also getting a fair amount. Other smaller ones are getting some money, too: the insurance industry, for instance, which is also at the same time successfully lobbying to be able to charge Albertans more. But that's a different issue. Lots of folks getting that money who already have money or who the members opposite plan to give more money to.

Obviously, that creates a fiscal challenge, as was identified by Moody's, the newest recruit to the ecoterrorist conspiracy, apparently, according to the Premier's latest analysis of the situation. Nonetheless, according to Moody's, because of the fact that we have cut \$4.7 billion and we've failed to do anything to diversify our economy, we are creating more instability. Of course, one of the things to mitigate that, if you decide that that's the way to go, is in fact to engage in very aggressive attacks on things that matter to regular Albertans. Indeed, this government is following that formula to a T, as described in Bill 21. That's really the high-level piece that we find Bill 21 plays. We are not creating jobs; we are not growing the economy. We are creating more economic uncertainty, and we are taking money away from regular Alberta families in order to hand it over to places like Exxon and Chevron.

So how exactly does Bill 21 enumerate the cuts that will be experienced by Albertans? Well, we've just finished talking about how this government has given itself the authority to claw back money that families will have spent decades or more saving for their seriously disabled child, sibling, uncle, aunt, whoever. They've given themselves the authority to claw that money back as it relates to entitlement to AISH, so that's nice. They've also of course continued on the theme of going to the most vulnerable Albertans and the severely disabled as your go-to to find money to fund your \$680 million gift to Exxon and Chevron, as reported by Bloomberg earlier today.

Who else are we going after? Well, with these folks we're also of course breaking the commitment that the members opposite made in the last election as well as in this House a very short time before the last election to ensure that indexation was a protection that these vulnerable Albertans could rely on. To be clear, just to lay this out there, indexation is not a windfall. Indexation is not a guarantee: oh, you know, you're going to earn more money next time because the government is richer, so you get a little bit more. It's not that. It is simply maintaining the same level of funding. That's all it is. Indexation means that you have the same amount of money in your pocket this year as you did last year, as you will next year, and it accounts for the ever-rising prices and challenges that people have.

Indexation is the classic form of security, and it matters the most to those who are on a fixed income and a low income. Indexation is, for instance, a feature of the pension that we know the Premier will ultimately be eligible for. It's a feature of CPP, that the UCP is very interested in playing around with. It's a long-standing principle that it's a fundamentally important provision when a society decides that the most vulnerable among us should be cared for in a humane way.

Now, we all understand the concept of a living wage. I'm assuming folks over there have accidentally stumbled on that concept at some point. Of course, the current rate of AISH is below what experts describe as a living wage, but nonetheless members opposite like to refer to it as generous. I find it a bit rich to hear people earning anywhere between \$120,000 and \$210,000 a year describe an allowance of about \$1,650 a month as generous. I'm going to tell you, Mr. Chair, that that's a little on the rich – when people think about: you know, how does one use that little bit of irony best in speech? That's kind of where you'd likely find that in the dictionary: rich.

11:50

Anyway, this bill, of course, breaks the promise of the election, breaks the promise of the vote that we saw, the unanimous vote, where there was a considered decision by the UCP under the leadership of the then Leader of the Opposition, the current Premier: "Let's make sure that Albertans think that we are generous, kind people, so let's all vote unanimously for indexation because – don't worry – if we win, we can undo it at the first opportunity. Yeah, that's what we're doing."

If I recall correctly – and I'm happy to be corrected – our rough estimate was that based on what future expectations are with respect to inflation next year, this will amount to about \$30 a month less that people will get as of January 1. The next year it will be about another \$30 a month; and the next year, another \$30 a month. You know, by the end of the four years we're looking at \$120 a month, but as many people on this side of the House have already mentioned, according to the Premier that's not onerous for them. We beg to differ. We think it is. It is particularly onerous when it's being done to fund the \$4.7 billion corporate handout, including, recently reported by Bloomberg, the \$680 million that is being pocketed by Chevron and Exxon this quarter as a result of it.

Now, what else do we see in Bill 21? Well, we see skyrocketing tuition. We see the cap being taken off tuition. Now, this is wrong for a couple of reasons. When we first got elected, the combination of tuition and other fees being charged at Alberta's universities meant that Albertans were paying the highest tuition in the country. I suppose that in some ways, given that we at that point also had the highest average income, it's not necessarily completely out of line that that would have been the case, except for the fact that not everybody enjoys that higher income.

In fact, my idea of a postsecondary education is that it really is the opportunity for those people who want to do better for themselves to take that path, so it should be available for everyone, not just the people who make a lot of money. We decided that we were going to try to bring the tuition down, so we imposed the freeze. We funded the freeze, not every year but some of the years, and in so doing, we went from the most expensive to the third-least expensive over the course of four years. To be clear, one of the things that that does is that it also attracts more students to Alberta.

At the end of the day, as much as I understand that our oil and gas and nonrenewable resources are a tremendous resource for Alberta – they have been in the past, and they will be in the future – and an opportunity to grow and build our economy, the biggest resource that Albertans have right now, which arguably is at greater risk than our

ability to maximize the value from our oil and gas resources, is our human resources. We have the youngest population and the best-educated population in the country. We have people flocking to Alberta. If what happens instead is that our young people start going to postsecondary in other provinces, they may not come back. Then we will start to lose that, and we'll start to have sort of the demographic outlook that you see in the Maritime provinces.

I know that when I was Premier, I used to talk with my colleagues in the Maritimes and think: jeez, you guys have a tough row to hoe in terms of growing your economy, growing your revenue, and fixing your fiscal challenges because, you know, all the factors are against you, and your demographics are very much against you. It is the opposite for Alberta. We have tremendous opportunity, but we won't if we push those people out.

The other thing is that it's also costing more for those families who are looking at trying to help their kids find that future that is so clearly offered through a postsecondary education. Of course, that cost is being added to because we've also cancelled the tuition tax credit that those families or their kids relied on. That's worth thousands of dollars to those families, and that's gone as well. Also, when these kids, as a result of higher tuition and the absence of the tuition tax credit, have to expand the borrowing that they engage in in order to go school, they also now have to pay more interest.

All in all, we've decided: "Yeah, you know what? Postsecondary education is not for everybody. No. We're going to make sure that it's mainly for those who can afford it so that, you know, those who have money get to keep it and those who don't have even fewer opportunities to get it." That is the view, I think, of what a good society looks like when it comes to the folks across the way.

Now, we've talked about disability income. We've also now seen a needless attack on the mobility of physicians, which is embedded in this bill. You know, I understand that there are a lot of complexities. I'll be quite frank with you. There are tremendous complexities in terms of the relationship between the government of Alberta and the physicians in Alberta. Many of them are challenges that, frankly, are a hangover from agreements and relationships that were negotiated by the previous Conservative government in 2012-13, I believe it was. They do provide huge complexities. There's a lot of work to be done to try to undo some of the challenges that were created by the rather hapless handling of that file.

But what I will say is that you're not going to fix the problem by once again breaching people's constitutional rights and creating yet another law firm unless, of course, private-sector lawyers are, in fact, the full on, one, only other element of diversification that this government is focused on achieving. If that's the case, then, you know, good on you; you're doing a great job because you pretty much get out of bed in the morning and you find a new way to challenge the constitutional rights of one or another group of Albertans. That means that we are always looking for new private-sector lawyers, not lawyers paid for by the government, of course, because we've decided to fire 90 of those. Instead, we'll go to the private sector and . . .

Ms Hoffman: Contract them out.

Ms Notley: . . . contract them out and now pay them \$400 an hour. That won't cost anybody any more money, said no one ever. Anyway, that's not necessarily what we're dealing with in this bill.

The point is that what you should be doing is sitting down respectfully with these doctors to find a solution to these problems. If you can't, there may be other solutions that the government should be initiating. I'll be honest. We were looking at some of those, too, because we definitely need to fix some of the problems that were created by the deal that was negotiated by the previous

PC government. What I will say is that this is not the way to do it, because this is petty. You're going to lose, and you're going to spend money losing, and you're going to make a difficult relationship worse. Strategically, it's just a thoughtless approach. Ultimately, it's not going to help rural health care, which I believe is probably what you're trying to do, but it's not going to work.

12:00

Ms Hoffman: I don't know if it is, actually.

Ms Notley: You know, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora doesn't think that they're actually trying to do that. She probably knows better than me because she's more attuned to the subtleties of these issues. In any event, it's not going to end well.

Then we see this whole issue with respect to enabling the change in the policing formula. Now, that's a fun one, I have to say. I mean, the Attorney General – wow. He's quite a character. He at various times makes various claims, and one does need, certainly, assistance in keeping track of the whole thing. Nonetheless, at one point he passionately claimed that this government would pay for 500 new police officers in rural Alberta. You know, in theory that's a very good idea, and I'm glad to hear that they were thinking about it because we all know that before they took over government, they actually took the time to vote against our government's more modest approach on reducing ... [Ms Notley's speaking time expired] Oh. My apologies.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to speak.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I deeply appreciated the words we were hearing from the Official Opposition leader. It certainly inspired me to want to stand up and just acknowledge how much I appreciated what she had to say. I imagine if I were to take my seat, she might have a bit more.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen to speak.

Ms Notley: Thank you. I thought I was going to get through all this in 20 minutes. I will certainly attempt to get through the rest of this as quickly as I can.

Anyway, we know that before the last election the members opposite actually voted for the actual funding increases that our government had put forward in order to specifically target rural crime and bring down the frequency and the incidence of rural crime. In fact, we saw that that targeted funding was achieving that very result. It's interesting because it was actually funding from the government of Alberta and it was also working. Instead, what happened is that the members opposite decided: no; we need to do something bold and big, and we're going to put 500 new police officers into rural Alberta. That then changed today to 300 police officers, and then, of course, it became clear that, no, the government of Alberta isn't putting those 300 police officers in. The municipalities are putting those 300 police officers in, and the taxpayers living in those small municipalities will be paying the cost of that. I think, again, if you were to look up bait and switch in the dictionary, one could actually use this example as sort of a classic caricature of baiting and switching. Anyway, that is what is enabled under this legislation and, for the reasons I just described, doesn't make a lot of sense to us.

Now, we've also talked as well about how this bill serves to undermine collective bargaining. It does that by allowing for scabs should there be a strike in the public sector. You know, people with expertise in labour relations across this country understand that the

best way to extend and polarize and weaponize a labour dispute is to bring in scabs and that, in fact, if you don't do that, you are much more likely to get to a resolution, which frankly is the fundamental objective of collective bargaining, for people to actually have some semblance of equal say and then to find a deal. I'm sure people here have heard me say this before: the best deal is one that nobody likes, either side. If both sides walk away from the deal irritated, it probably means you landed on exactly the right deal. That's what you need to do in collective bargaining. That's what negotiating is about, but it doesn't make things any better by allowing for the introduction of scabs. We've never had that in Alberta, yet this government is so hostile to the notion of workers coming together to support each other and to commodify their resource, which is their labour, in a strategic way to bargain most effectively with their employer. This is nuts and bolts. This isn't, you know, some extremist left-wing thing. I mean, collective bargaining has been a common feature of modern industrial society for a couple of centuries now. It is a way to ensure that people get things like, oh, wages.

We talked yesterday about how the members opposite are kind of opposed to the paying of wages to certain employees. Nonetheless, the majority of people actually think that a guarantee of wages after you've done some work is a good thing, and the majority of people actually think that a guarantee of fair wages is a good thing. It's not just a principle in and of itself; it's actually good economics. There are so many economic experts out there who will tell you that profound inequality stifles economic growth and ultimately leads to economic crisis whereas greater equality ultimately leads to greater purchasing power, greater consumption, and greater economic growth. Basically, your first-year economics course, your first-year history course, your first-year industrial arts course in any one of a number of bachelor of arts degrees will walk you through the history and the evidence around that. I'm not sure why it is that the folks opposite are so committed to growing inequality, because it may provide a short-term gain for themselves or their friends. I'm not suggesting that they are trying to line their own pockets, but it may provide a short-term gain for their best friends. But in the long term, massive and growing inequality creates a similar level of instability and ultimately stifles economic growth.

Now, this bill also removes the regulated rate cap on electricity. What that means, then, is that regular families are going to be subjected to spiking electricity costs. This is particularly a problem now – this is not embedded in this bill; it's embedded in a bill that we passed earlier this session – given that we're moving away from the capacity market and maintaining the energy-only market, which most experts will say is only sustainable if the price on electricity cap is increased roughly 10-fold, from \$1,000 to \$10,000, which is in essence what happened in Texas. That's the only way that you will be able to attract enough investment in order to serve our electricity needs. Now, it is possible that our electricity needs have moderated somewhat because of the recession, as a result of the drop in the price of oil, but in the longer term what we know from the energy-only market is that we had tremendous energy volatility. Many people will remember the Calgary Stampede in about I want to say 2013 as a guess.

Mr. Bilous: Maybe 2014.

Ms Notley: Maybe '14. The Stampede basically shut down, and people were left on the Ferris wheel because, basically, we had a brownout because electricity prices spiked and we didn't have enough. It was a real problem, and that was what we were looking to see more of under the energy-only market.

Anyway, now that we've decided to maintain that regime rather than moving to the more stable capacity market, the issues around

electricity caps are even more critical. This month we'll see bills go up about \$7 a month. I mean, you know, not onerous, to use the Premier's words, unless you're on AISH because you've already lost \$30.

12:10

Nonetheless, we'll see the average bill go up about \$7, but combined with the energy-only market continuing to be the primary method of delivery, what it means is that we're also likely to see those spikes get much larger than \$7, and that's something, again, that we are asking the people of Alberta to pay for.

I think that, for the most part, I have covered the most obvious elements that exist within this bill, but this bill really is a subset, as I said, of a larger theme. We have a government here that is introducing its first budget. This bill is party to that budget. They ran in April saying that they were going to chase and promote jobs, economy, pipelines. So far we have lost jobs. So far the economy is in worse shape, and projections for economic growth have been revised downwards, not upwards. As for pipelines, the work that we had started with TMX and with line 3 continues, and there's no sign of any other work happening on any other pipelines. The Premier has been in office now for six months, and there's no proponent proposing anything else. We're still working on the same pipelines. You know, nothing has moved any faster because of anything that this government has done.

That's what they promised. Now they also, notwithstanding their jobs, economy, pipelines mantra, promised that they would protect front-line services, and they accused us of engaging in fear and smear when we suggested that perhaps that was inaccurate. What we have since heard, of course, is that that was incorrect. They are attacking front-line services. We heard on Friday of letters that were sent that identified at this point – at this point – roughly 8,000 jobs that were at risk. That didn't include the additional 3,000 that might be at risk if they go ahead with privatizing ambulance services. For the love of God, I can't imagine a more misguided plan. If I really sat down and tried to think to myself, "What is the most misguided thing anybody could do?" and "If you were really trying to do something that was unwise, what would you do?" that would come up. Yeah. There they are. Anyway, you know, 8,000 identified in the letters. Clearly, if you read the letters, you see that there is actually room for significantly more losses after that. Profound breach of trust with the people of Alberta by this government and also a whole series of job losses: that's happening in contrast to what this government had promised.

The other thing. We see we haven't delivered on jobs, the economy. We have broken our promise with respect to front-line services. We are throwing people out of work. Oh, right. Repeatedly the Premier would talk in the election about respecting the rule of law. Well, actually, that's the other big thing that we saw in this session, that in fact the Premier has no respect for the rule of law and is quite willing to breach it at the slightest opportunity. In fact, that's what we saw with Bill 22, an overt breach of the rule of law.

All in all, this Bill 21 ties into that overarching narrative around what the first full session of this government has been about, what the budget has been about. It's been about attacking Albertans to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout, which is not creating jobs, which is not diversifying the economy, which is, in fact, jeopardizing the economy and at the same time breaking their promise on other issues around front-line services and protecting front-line workers who provide important services to Albertans, and then, in addition, attacking Albertans directly through the elimination of important programs that they and their families rely on a great deal, Mr. Chair.

For all these reasons, I suppose it comes as no surprise that I can't urge my colleagues to support Bill 21 and that I will in fact be urging the members in my caucus to vote against it. I would of course urge members opposite to think about the things they said to voters when they were running in the last election and think about whether this really is what they told them that they were going to do and just think about whether it's the right thing and, on the basis of that, consider voting against this bill. Either way, even if, to no great surprise, they decide to proceed with the many misguided plans embedded in this bill, we will be standing very strong to vote against it.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to outline the most basic of reasons for why we cannot support Bill 21.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members willing or wishing to speak on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has risen to speak.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. Mr. Chair, I would just like to correct the record on one point from the previous speaker. I think she probably misunderstands the two announcements that refer to policing in Alberta. The first one, nearly 500 officers, was with regard to fish and game officers and sheriffs and highway sheriffs, who will be given new powers and new authorities to actually enforce some of these law items. That's the first. The second announcement was with regard to the municipal agreement with the RCMP as well. We'll add an additional 300 RCMP officers.

So 500 didn't somehow morph down to 300. It's actually two separate announcements, two separate forces, two separate numbers. I'm sure that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition wouldn't deliberately blur those numbers. I just felt that I needed to set the record straight on that. We are actually doing everything possible to resolve the crime issues in Alberta and needed to set the record straight on that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak on Bill 21? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll be very, very quick. I need to address the previous member's comments. The original plan promise was 500 new officers . . .

Ms Notley: Police officers.

Mr. Bilous: . . . police officers, which has since been downgraded to I believe 300.

Ms Notley: Police officers.

Mr. Bilous: Police officers, that is, Mr. Chair. The Leader of the Official Opposition was not incorrect in her numbers. The numbers that were originally put out by the Justice minister are not the numbers that are now being proposed through this legislation.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

As the committee will recall, there was a request to vote on this bill in blocks, blocks A through K. I'm prepared to move forward in that vein. On the clauses in block A, section 1, of the bill, are you agreed?

[Section 1 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: On block B, sections 2 and 17 of the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 2 and 17 of Bill 21 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:20 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against:

Bilous	Goehring	Notley
Dach	Gray	Pancholi
Dang	Loyola	Renaud
Deol	Nielsen	Shepherd

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 12
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[Sections 2 and 17 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Continuing on to block C, sections 3 and 5 of the bill.

[Sections 3 and 5 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: On block D, section 4.

[The voice vote indicated that section 4 of Bill 21 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:24 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Dang	Loyola	Renaud
Deol	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13
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[Section 4 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Moving on to block E of the bill, sections 6 and 10.

[Sections 6 and 10 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: On block F, section 9 of the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that section 9 of Bill 21 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:29 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13
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[Section 9 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: We continue on to block G of the bill, consisting of section 11.

[The voice vote indicated that section 11 of Bill 21 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:33 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13
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[Section 11 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Moving on to block H, sections 12 and 18 of the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 12 and 18 of Bill 21 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:37 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

12:40

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13
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[Sections 12 and 18 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Moving on to block I, section 13 of the bill.

[Section 13 of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Moving on to block J, section 14 and schedule.

[Section 14 and schedule of Bill 21 agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: On to block K, sections 15 and 16 of the bill.

[Sections 15 and 16 of Bill 21 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 21. 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 Speaker: Hon. members, does the Assembly agree in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 20

Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, reflects our government's commitment to address Alberta's economic and fiscal challenges.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the majority of my comments, I do want to clear up some confusion around where this province's accumulated debt will be at the end of our fiscal plan relative to the previous government's fiscal plan. In an effort to be completely transparent with Albertans, within this fiscal plan our government has included what will be a cash balance. Because we will be in an election year in 2023, we've included in our accumulated debt, very appropriately, \$7 billion.

Unfortunately, the previous government chose to omit that cash balance that they have been required to carry at that same time, Mr. Speaker, and I have heard repeatedly confusion on the other side of the House that our debt levels at the end of four years would be virtually the same. Well, that simply is inaccurate. The reality is that with our four-year fiscal plan, the budget that we passed this fall, our accumulated debt will be \$11 billion lower than the previous government's plan. That doesn't include the fact that, in our opinion and based on our observations after preparing our current revenue projections and fiscal plan, we are quite certain that the previous government's revenue projections were inflated and unrealistic, to say the least.

Mr. Speaker, the measures of this bill, Bill 20, allow government to better manage its cash flow, reduce needless administration costs, and deliver services more efficiently for Albertans. This is essential work to get our province back to balance. Bill 20 proposes dissolving a number of dedicated funds. Let me be clear: dissolving these funds does not affect the important programs and services they support. What we are doing is shifting these funds into the general revenue fund, where program spending will continue as budgeted.

More specifically, let me address the lottery fund. Nonprofit recipients will continue to benefit in the same way as they have in the past. With the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, Budget 2019 continues to allocate \$25 million per year to cancer-related prevention, screening, and research initiatives. Dissolving dedicated funds is a red tape reduction measure that lowers our borrowing costs, enhances our spending transparency, and reduces administrative spending. Mr. Speaker, this common-sense change is estimated to save approximately \$13 million per year in debt-servicing costs.

Bill 20 also eliminates a number of targeted tax credits. Our government is focused on a low-rate, broad-based tax approach that doesn't pick winners and losers. Innovation continues to be critically important to ensure our competitiveness. In fact, Budget 2019 includes more than \$200 million that will be spent on research, innovation, and commercialization. We are also spending \$34 million on artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Finally, Bill 20 addresses municipalities' requests for more predictable funding. When municipalities have more certainty in their budgets, they can deliver better services at lower costs to Albertans. That's why Bill 20 proposes introducing the local government fiscal framework act, which will deliver predictable, long-term capital funding for all municipalities.

I would like to thank the House for their debate on this bill and to say one last time that I'm confident that Bill 20 is a step in the right direction for Alberta and for our province's finances.

Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has moved third reading.

Does anyone else wish to join in the debate today? I see the hon. Government House Leader is looking to rise to speak.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

The Speaker: I believe what the hon. Government House Leader meant to ask for was unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: It appeared to me that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud would like to join the debate.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on third reading of Bill 20 to express my deep concern with its provisions. Now, there are a number of provisions which I object to in this bill, another of the government's omnibus bills which crams through a number of significant changes to legislation and will have significant impacts on Albertans.

There are a number of those changes that I object to, which include the end to the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the community economic tax credit, the investor tax credit, and the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. I object to the end of the education and tuition tax credits, which will make postsecondary tuition much more expensive for Albertans. I object to the repeal of the city charters for Edmonton and Calgary and putting a new local government fiscal framework act in its place. I object to the bracket creep, which this government and particularly this Premier claimed to object to vociferously prior to becoming Premier but now, of course, has no problem implementing. I object to ending the lottery fund and moving that money into general revenue, to ending the access to the future fund, the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, and the environmental protection and enhancement fund. I object to the ending of the funding agreements on 90-days notice for the LRT in Edmonton and Calgary.

12:50

I object to all of these provisions, but the one that I'd like to speak to for just a few minutes in third reading on Bill 20 is the one that speaks to the very reason that I chose to run for political office. I chose to run as part of this team, as part of the NDP and this caucus, because I believed it was making significant progress in social

justice and lifting people out of poverty in this province. Nothing was clearer evidence of that than the fact that in a time of extreme economic restraint, when there were a lot of tough times for Albertans, the previous government managed to raise thousands of Albertan children out of poverty. They cut the child poverty rate in half.

While I can take absolutely no credit for that because I was not a part of this caucus during that time, I can tell you that I was extremely proud to stand up as part of this team, as part of this party, and put my name forward for election on that basis almost alone. To me, if you're going to run for political office, running to end child poverty or to significantly reduce it should be a primary objective. In fact, I would say that if you're not running for that reason, I don't know why you're running. That is a track record that I believe this caucus, this opposition, can be extremely proud of. I believe it is so important because if we're raising children out of poverty – those are our most vulnerable Albertans from our most vulnerable families – we're giving them a chance at a better life and better opportunity.

For me, that was a main inspiration and motivation to put my name forward, to be part of a party and a team that puts children and poverty as their top priority. That is why I have concerns about the provision in Bill 20 which rolls the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit into a single Alberta child and family benefit. Now, the idea of rolling it into one is not necessarily problematic. In fact, it's true that by rolling it into one, the payments get unified into one payment quarterly, which is also a good thing. That's an administrative improvement. However, while this government has stood up and said that this new Alberta child and family benefit will actually pay more to lower income families, which is a good thing, what they're not saying when they talk about the lower income families who are going to be making more money is who is making less.

Who is making less is not higher income families; it's families that are just at or slightly above the poverty line. The poverty line for a two-income family is just below \$40,000 a year. For a single-parent family the poverty line is just under \$35,000 a year. So while, yes, those making under \$25,000 a year – and picture that, under \$25,000 a year; that is a very small amount – will get more money through this Alberta child and family benefit, which is a good thing, I do not object to that, what this government is not saying is that those families who are still just at or slightly above the poverty line, still within a \$30,000 to \$40,000 annual income a year raising two children, are going to make significantly less. In fact, families who earn more than \$25,000 a year will see their benefit payments decline up to \$821 a year. A two-child, two-parent family that is right at the poverty line will receive nearly \$500 less a year under this new benefit.

Again, while I do not object to the idea of lower income families making more through this benefit, I do object to the fact that it is coming on the back of families that are still just scraping by, that are making almost the bare minimum in life. We know that child benefits are a key strategy and a key tool to reducing child poverty. Under the previous government the Alberta child benefit along with measures such as increasing minimum wage – 60 per cent of minimum wage earners are women; often they are single parents – and providing things such as affordable and accessible child care so a family member can go back to work, a parent can go back to work, those strategies combined with the child benefit were key to lifting children out of poverty in this province, key to cutting the child poverty rate in half.

While this government is touting how much they are giving to the lowest of low-income families, they are doing it on the backs of families that are still incredibly close to the poverty line. It does not

actually make life better for more Albertans. Combined with the other measures that have been taken by this government, what we're going to see is more and more Alberta families and Alberta children who will be sinking into poverty. There is no strategy here to lift children out of poverty. In fact, what we're seeing is that they're making life more expensive for the most vulnerable families. We're seeing school fees go up. We're seeing people on AISH making less. All of those measures are actually going to make life less affordable for the most vulnerable.

So I cannot stand here and support a bill that is actually going to result in putting more families into poverty. That is why I will be standing up to vote against Bill 20.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate this evening? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the great fortune of following the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Well, normally, one doesn't consider oneself fortunate to follow someone that articulate, but as a result, I won't comment extensively on the child tax benefit and my feelings about it. I think she articulated the point very well. I will say that while I absolutely support supporting the most vulnerable among us, those who live just above the poverty line are not in a comfortable position either, and we certainly shouldn't be doing things to take away from them.

There are a couple of other things in this bill that I think are worth mentioning. One of them certainly has to do with the funding for the green line in Calgary. I would definitely say that I am deeply concerned to see that funding put in jeopardy. In fact, we're going to see city council having to make some very, very difficult decisions about how they proceed on the green line. That was needed infrastructure in Calgary. In the election the current government said over and over again that they were committed to it, that they weren't going to change the funding, that they weren't going to take the funding. Of course, now we see that they've done it. So that's a big concern for me.

The lottery fund is another big concern for me. This is the source of funding for an enormous number of charitable groups: groups that help with poverty, that help with community activities, that help with a whole range and spectrum of different things. To see that money put in jeopardy – you know, the government says, “Well, it's going into general revenue, and we can still give it out,” but there's no clear path on how much will be given out or whether it will change. In light of some of the other moves that we've seen them make, I think that we can probably conclude it won't be as generous as it was before. I think that's a big concern because at the same time the government is withdrawing services and they're saying, “Let us rely on civil society,” now they're also withdrawing funds from civil societies. So I think that's a huge concern.

But I think the thing in this bill – and it's hard to pick just one – that I find most damaging and most concerning is the removal of multiple different tax incentive programs. The Alberta investor tax credit was working. It was attracting industry, and it was attracting new types of industry. It was attracting the video games sector, it was attracting the tech sector, and it was attracting different industries that haven't historically been present in this province.

The reason that that's important is because a diverse economy is a resilient economy. An economy that has all sorts of different jobs means that if one sector is experiencing challenges, as we know – anyone who, like me, has spent their entire life in this province is very familiar with oil prices fluctuating. They fluctuate significantly. This isn't the first time we've seen a recession in this

province, and it isn't the first time we've had this conversation about the fact that being reliant on just one industry makes the population in this province incredibly vulnerable. If jobs disappear in that major employer, that impacts the entire economy. If we had more sectors in our economy – I don't believe the members opposite; I believe that we can support oil and gas while simultaneously supporting other industries. If we don't have that larger economy, where people can go to different jobs when one sector is experiencing challenges, it makes us vulnerable, and I think we lose some of that resilience.

1:00

The members opposite like to say that they're here to spur economic growth, but I think we've seen this cycle over and over again. This has been tried in the past, this let's drop the corporate tax rate and hope the economy diversifies itself. It's never worked. My colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview did an incredible job of listening to industry, of setting up these tax credits in a way that would work for them, and it was attracting business. What's the saddest thing is that you talk to people, especially in Calgary – you know, I've spoken to a number of lawyers who talk about clients that they had, did have, I guess, now past tense, who were looking to bring their businesses to Alberta, who were looking to move their business to Alberta, who were looking to open an office in Alberta, who would have been moving into those towers in downtown Calgary, and now they're not coming. I think that's a huge concern.

We've seen net job losses under this government, and I think that's a huge concern. Trickle-down economics doesn't work. We've seen it demonstrated over and over again, and it certainly doesn't diversify the economy.

We have had one small victory, which I'm very proud of, which is that we finally convinced this government to reverse course with respect to some of the film and television industry tax credits. I think that's delightful; I do. I am glad that they listened. I am glad that we were able to convince them. But what I do think is a bit telling is that they've been convinced on this one thing. They say: okay; this one tax credit aimed at a certain industry is good, but all of the other tax credits aimed at different industries is just picking winners and losers. I mean, that's ridiculous because either they're good or they're bad. I think they were good. I think they were incredibly good because we saw business coming here – we saw business moving here from other places; we saw new head offices opening – and it would have had an incredible impact on our economy. We're actually not dissimilar to Colorado, that used to have a very oil-focused economy and that ultimately moved into a more diversified economy with a lot of tech sector work. We had the opportunity to do that, and that's what was happening. Now we will lose that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will end, but I must say that I am incredibly disappointed to see these tax credits go because they would have had an incredibly beneficial impact, now and in the future.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to provide a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 20?

I am prepared to call the question, but the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has the opportunity to close debate should he wish to do so.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I waive.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:04 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	McIver	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Neudorf	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Hanson	Orr	Stephan
Horner	Rehn	Toews
Issik	Reid	Walker
Kenney	Rosin	Wilson

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Pancholi
Dach	Gray	Renaud
Deol	Loyola	Shepherd
Ganley	Nielsen	

Totals: For – 30 Against – 11

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a third time]

Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring we promised Albertans we would balance the budget by 2022-23. Budget 2019 reflects this commitment. Bill 21 helps us achieve this goal by controlling government spending, finding efficiencies, and improving our fiscal management. In essence, Bill 21 is about living within our means so that we can maintain the high-quality services Albertans deserve not just today but also for future generations.

Bill 21 proposes many common-sense changes, and one of those is how we fund advanced education. These changes bring us closer in line with other large provinces while continuing our support for our world-class postsecondary institutions. Bill 21 would also update our government's approach to supplying emergency and contingency funding as well as other improvements to our fiscal rules and reporting. This will improve government's transparency and accountability to Alberta's taxpayers. Our government was elected to bring responsible fiscal management back to our province, and this bill does just that. Bill 21 proposes changes that would ensure that our police forces have access to sustainable funding and that underserved Albertans have access to quality, timely medical care anywhere in the province.

Mr. Speaker, all of these changes are being proposed to chart a new course in Alberta's fiscal management. We are changing the spending trajectory of the province and doing so in a responsible and compassionate manner. This province has a long-standing overspending problem, and our budget implementation bills will put us on a sustainable track. I would like to thank the House for their time and attention to this bill and on all the bills that implement Budget 2019.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

1:10

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has moved third reading of Bill 21. Is there anyone else that would like to join in the debate this evening? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me this evening to speak one final time to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, which I actually think we should be calling An Act to Make Life More Difficult for Albertans. Many things I have a problem with in this piece of legislation.

You know, we just heard the Minister of Finance talk about how we're working to balance the budget here compassionately, yet when we talk about people on AISH, income supports, and the seniors' lodge program, I hardly think – taking away \$300 million from those groups is not what I would consider compassionate. I'm not really sure why we are actually, consciously making a decision to take away a mere few dollars from some of the most vulnerable Albertans. It's either a case of: we're looking to purposely do this, or perhaps it's maybe because we want to figure out a way to pay for that reckless \$4.7 billion corporate gift card that hasn't created a single job yet, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we heard very clearly time and time again that they were going to create jobs, that they were going to grow the economy. We're well behind in the jobs. It's going to take you quite a while just to catch up, just to get to break-even. Probably, best case, this economy has stalled. More likely, worst case, it is downgrading, kind of like what just happened to our credit rating here.

Other things that I'm looking at: ending tuition freezes, increasing student loans. I very clearly have not heard from any students yet who have said: I want to pay more for that. I can't find them. I keep asking every chance I get, and that is either from postsecondary students whom I've had the opportunity to meet with – having three of the high schools in Edmonton that are north of the Yellowhead, I have yet to find students that are excited to be able to pay more when they get to postsecondary education.

We've also seen an end to the regulated rate option cap for electricity. This one is an interesting one, Mr. Speaker, because we're looking backwards. We're looking in the past, to go back to something that only one other jurisdiction on the continent has. Everybody else moved away from it. You know, maybe as we look at this, I guess the piece of advice I would say: stop looking back, Marty; come back to the future, please.

Also, around PIDs, the practitioner identification numbers, I've had the opportunity to meet with a lot of medical students in differing years of their education. Most have said that had they known something like this was going to be coming forward, they might have even reconsidered the path that they were taking. You know, this is a failed plan in other jurisdictions. They're starting to repeal it because it didn't work. It had the absolute opposite effect. Why we would take something that we've very clearly seen doesn't work and try to force it to work here does not make any sense.

We also see changes around how municipalities will be paying for policing. Mr. Speaker, that is very clearly a download onto the municipalities. There's no other way to describe this. They're going to be on the hook for a lot of money. I suspect that that will get passed on to taxpayers, but, hey, at least the government won't have the responsibility of saying: well, it wasn't really us; it was them. So municipalities are being used as the scapegoat for this.

We're also seeing changes to how the province uses money collected on behalf of municipalities for fines. I suspect that there's one of two things here. Either the Minister of Municipal Affairs does not believe municipalities have the capability to manage this

themselves, or they need yet another source of revenue to pay for their \$4.7 billion gift card, the one, of course, that was located on page 144 of their budget. We've heard the Premier say, you know, that the real number is the true fact, so I'm taking him at his word. It's located on page 144. It's one or the other.

We also see things around interfering in collective bargaining. Mr. Speaker, if we want to grow this economy, if we want to attract businesses to this province, creating labour unrest will be a factor that will discourage those businesses from coming here. Also, the fact that schooling is getting more expensive: that could affect student enrolment, in which case the workforce that these companies would have access to would diminish. That is also a demoralizing fact for them to come here.

All of these changes we're seeing are presented in an omnibus piece of legislation, something that members of the current front bench and members of the caucus on the government side, when they were members of the 29th Legislature – I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you recall very, very clearly those times – when they thought that the NDP government brought in a piece of omnibus legislation, were adamantly opposed to. Yet we have one of four pieces of omnibus legislation being presented here and rammed through at the sprightly hour of 1:15 in the morning. I think that is a little bit hypocritical, and I would suggest that you probably would have argued very adamantly against such a thing, you know, based on how well I know you served in the 29th Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I am not able to support this legislation. It is making life harder for Albertans. It's making life more expensive for Albertans. It's putting Albertans at a disadvantage. This is not how we create jobs, this is not how we grow the economy, and it's not how we lead on the world stage.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in debate on Bill 21? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this will likely be my last time speaking to Bill 21. I just want to say a couple of other things, you know, nothing that I haven't really said before. I think you'll remember the days when we passed the legislation around AISH and Henson trusts, indexing AISH and doing that slight increase. I think that was a really great day. It was a great day because we all agreed that it was an important investment in Albertans, and it was a great day for Albertans because they knew that for once they mattered enough that they were not going to have to fight for an increase, to fight for recognition, and that they were worth investing in.

So when the Finance minister stands up and says that this bill is about responsible fiscal management and finding efficiencies to live within our means, it's incredibly insulting to me, for people that are living on \$1,600 a month. For a government that is willing to spend \$120 million on a war room, to give \$4.7 billion to profitable corporations, that is finding efficiencies to live within our means on the backs of people with severe handicaps in this province: it's incredibly insulting, and it's incredibly disappointing.

You know, I know that there are two government members that sit on the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, a group that I was able to join for a little bit. The overriding, I guess, direction that is set for that group is the UN declaration on the rights of persons with disabilities. I'm sure that the members have read the supplemental information that people are provided. It's about inclusion and it's about respect and it's about poverty reduction. It's about all of those things.

1:20

I'm sad that this government chose not to consult with people like the disability advocate or the Premier's Council on the Status of

Persons with Disabilities or even any Albertans with disabilities because if you had, you would know that what you're doing is creating havoc in people's lives. They already can't afford to live. They already can't afford their places. For the most part, they end up short every month. They end up with too many roommates, unable to leave bad situations. They end up at the food bank. The reality is grinding poverty. I have not seen one government member flinch and even stand up to consider that what they're doing is harmful. They're trying to enact this fairy tale, that benefits will trickle down to people because you're investing in wealthy corporations or the very wealthy. All you're doing is creating a bigger gap than is there already. I'm incredibly disappointed. I'm not surprised, but I'm incredibly disappointed, Mr. Speaker.

I was reminded by one of my colleagues of the day that that announcement was made. I know that I wasn't the only person that actually cried that day, actually cried with joy to be part of a government or part of a Legislature that chose to be so bold as to say to people with disabilities: you matter, and we're investing in you; you're not going to have to beg for scraps every year. Now this is undone under the guise of responsible fiscal management. I'm incredibly disappointed. I'm incredibly disappointed that none of the government members or ministers have been willing to stand up and explain it or even answer our questions. It's disrespectful, it's incredibly disappointing, and it's an incredibly sad way to end this Legislature. After a lot of sad things have happened, it's incredibly sad.

You will see this. You will see the effects of this. You will see them in your constituencies. You will see them all over. You will see the cost to other services that you're also cutting, but you will see this and you will feel this and you will be responsible for this. On that, I'm going to end. I'm incredibly disappointed that people that stood up and defended the changes that we made and said that, yes, they agreed with them, members that are here now sitting on the government side, now suddenly are silent. Are they being silenced, or did they just change their minds suddenly, that people with disabilities don't matter as much? I don't know, but we will find out. This isn't the end of it. It's the beginning. People are watching, Mr. Speaker. I know that at 1 o'clock in the morning people are still watching. I'm still getting messages. They're hearing what we're saying, and you will be accountable. Maybe not today, but you will be.

That's it.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 21?

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

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:24 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews

Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		
Against the motion:		
Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		
Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

Statement by the Speaker

Remarks at the End of the Fall Sitting

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to recognizing the hon. Government House Leader – and I would never presuppose what the hon. Government House Leader may be doing – let me thank

you all for a very productive session. I hope that each and every one of you has a safe, very merry Christmas, a happy New Year.

I ask that you would join me in thanking *Hansard*, the table, security, pages, all of those who dedicate their time, their hours, and are committed to our province and to each member of the Assembly and, in particular, on this evening in room 315 Ms Judy Bressmer, who is probably shedding one small tear this evening, knowing that a lengthy public service career is mere moments away from being concluded. If you can join me in thanking them all, I know that I would appreciate that.

The hon. the Government House Leader has the call.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my duty to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 39, agreed to on November 27, the business for the 2019 fall sitting is concluded.

[The Assembly adjourned at 1:30 a.m. on Thursday pursuant to Government Motion 39]

Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)

Activity to Wednesday, December 4, 2019

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 243-46 (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1]

Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), 449-62 (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), 500-99 (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1416-26 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1585-1612 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8]

Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 462-500 (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), 660-66 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 760-70 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5]

Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2]

Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4]

Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3]

Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6]

Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), 1431-1585 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1612-27 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1627 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1628-33 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7]

Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)

First Reading — 808 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-91 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1046-60 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve.*), 1062-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7]

Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)

First Reading — 808 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2]

Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5]

Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1411-16 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9]

Bill 13* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), 1395-1411 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1426-31 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1633-35 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5]

Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cA-26.3]

Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c13]

Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1911-15 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 c12]

Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1915-26 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1949-59 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cD-13.5]

Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1926-29 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft.*), 1931-45 (*Oct. 22, 2019 eve.*), 1947-49 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1959-66 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1978-90 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1990-94 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft.*), 2037-41 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2055-56 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c11]

Bill 19 — Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (\$) (Nixon, JJ)

First Reading — 2053 (*Oct. 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2123-26 (*Oct. 31, 2019 aft.*), 2146-57 (*Nov. 4, 2019 aft.*), 2177-79 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2237-49 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2305-10 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020, with exceptions; SA 2019 c16]

Bill 20* — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2056-66 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2089-2100 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2167-77 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2227-37 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve.*), 2366-68 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve.*), 2410-14 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft.*), 2415 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2509-23 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve.*), 2564-70 (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft.*), 2600-05 (*Nov. 27, 2019 morn.*), 2679-93 (*Dec. 2, 2019 eve.*), 2750-57 (*Dec. 3, 2019 eve.*), 2775-85 (*Dec. 4, 2019 morn.*), 2800-15 (*Dec. 4, 2019 aft., passed on division with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2846-49 (*Dec. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c20]

Bill 21 — Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2066-74 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2100-10 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2159-67 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve.*), 2193-2212 (*Nov. 5, 2019 eve.*), 2265-70 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2312-23 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve.*), 2369-81 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn.*), 2579-86 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve.*), 2628-30 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft.*), 2702-11 (*Dec. 3, 2019 morn.*), 2732-42 (*Dec. 3, 2019 aft.*), 2743-50 (*Dec. 3, 2019 eve.*), 2817-46 (*Dec. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 2849-51 (*Dec. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c18]

Bill 22* — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 2282 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 2340-66 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve.*), 2415-21 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2422-29 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2429-40 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2441-48 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2449 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn.*), 2451-58 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c15]

Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)

First Reading — 2262 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2301-03 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft.*), 2310-12 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2366 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2381-82 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 22, 2019; SA 2019 c14]

Bill 24 — Appropriation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 2340 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 2382 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn.*), 2394-2405 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft.*), 2429 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2458-61 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn.*), 2461 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 2505 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve.*), 2523 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2019; SA 2019 c17]

Bill 25 — Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (Hunter)

First Reading — 2284 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2527-37 (*Nov. 26, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2571-74 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2587-2600 (*Nov. 27, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 5, 2019, with exceptions; SA 2019 c22]

Bill 26 — Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019 (Dreeshen)

First Reading — 2394 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2551-64 (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2631-35 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed on division*), 2726-32 (*Dec. 3, 2019 aft., recommitted*), 2757-66 (*Dec. 3, 2019 eve., recommitted passed on division*)

Third Reading — 2725-26 (*Dec. 3, 2019 aft., recommitted to Committee*), 2767-75 (*Dec. 4, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c19]

Bill 27 — Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)

First Reading — 2336 (*Nov. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2523-25 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2574-79 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2639-45 (*Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 5, 2019; SA 2019 c23]

Bill 28 — Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act (Shandro)

First Reading — 2473 (Nov. 21, 2019 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 2505-09 (Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 2635-38 (Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 2647-49 (Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 5, 2019; SA 2019 cO-8.5]

Bill 29 — Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)

First Reading — 2618 (Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 2645-46 (Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 2693-96 (Dec. 2, 2019 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 2699-2702 (Dec. 3, 2019 morn., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 5, 2019; SA 2019 c21]

Bill 201* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 799 (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 825-38 (Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6]

Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 799 (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 838-40 (Jun. 17, 2019 aft.), 1115-22 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft.), 1882 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 1883-87 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft.), 2027-29 (Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Oct. 30, 2019 aft.) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c10]

Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)

First Reading — 808 (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 1281 (Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly), 1875-82 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft., not proceeded with on division)

Bill 204 — Election Recall Act (Smith)

First Reading — 1977 (Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2223 (Nov. 6, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 2283-95 (Nov. 18, 2019 aft.), 2488-89 (Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed)

Bill 205 — Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019 (Jones)

First Reading — 2223 (Nov. 6, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2550 (Nov. 26, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Bill 206 — Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Reid)

First Reading — 2262 (Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2393-94 (Nov. 20, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 2489-95 (Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 2495-96 (Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed)

Bill 207 — Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act (Williams)

First Reading — 2263 (Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on div; referred to Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2550 (Nov. 26, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly), 2677 (Dec. 2, 2019 aft., adjourned)

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