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The 30th Legislature
Second Session

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Day 18

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Morning, hon. members. Welcome back.

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government and to Members of the Legislative Assembly and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

Mr. McIver: Madam Speaker, I rise to request unanimous consent of the Assembly that members may be able to sit, speak, and vote from any chair within the Assembly for all of today's sitting.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 3

Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020

The Chair: We are on amendment A3. Are there any speakers wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 3, Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020, and I believe we're on amendment A3. Just as a way of introduction, I just wanted to thank all essential service workers here in the province of Alberta, the people working in hospitals, EMS staff, people working in grocery stores, a whole range of Albertans who have stepped up, I believe, quite bravely to ensure that we have food to purchase and to consume, that we have health care and care for our loved ones and fellow Albertans in all facilities here in the province. It's quite remarkable to see not only people stepping up to do those jobs in the face of some calculated risk but, I think, also how Albertans have responded to support those workers and people in those positions as well. We know that we're only as strong as how we stand together through good times and difficult times.

I would just remind all MLAs, if you look around, of part of the iconography of this Chamber. If you just look to the bottom part of the finishing work on this room, you'll see an ancient Roman symbol of bundles of sticks. As individual sticks they can be broken, but today, bound together, they are strong and cannot be broken. This is a symbol of our democracy. It's a symbol of the binding power of our communities, and as we assemble here today to carry on with the business of governance and legislation, let's remember who and what we are here to support every step of the

way. I can never be prouder of all Albertans in how they have stepped up during both this medical crisis and the economic difficulties that we're facing, and I've never been as proud myself to be an Albertan as I am here today.

With that, we carry on with the business of strengthening legislation around the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020. You know, we've said from the beginning that we believe this is a good direction for the Legislature, to strengthen the ability of both tenants and the owners of mobile-home sites to have a dispute resolution place to deal with issues, and we have, just by way of review, talked about the importance of having a place where you can have resolution without necessarily taking legal action, although it's certainly left that option to the affected parties so that they can have that option, too.

We know that by having a dispute mechanism that doesn't necessarily result in immediate legal action, I think, it not only provides some utility to dealing with issues that do happen at mobile-home sites, but it also sends a good point of reference for people to know the sense of security in the back of their minds, to know that they can take a dispute or some conflict that needs to be resolved and that you're not necessarily intimidated into silence – right? – because, of course, for regular folks, of which I consider myself one, you know, the notion that you need to take something to court straightaway to deal with an issue is intimidating and feels like it could be financially out of reach or difficult for somebody. To have alternate ways by which we can solve issues: then I think we not only provide a way to save money and to provide a vehicle, but we also provide peace of mind and security for people to know that if they have an issue at their mobile-home community, they can indeed access different issues.

You know, we brought forward this amendment to strengthen this idea, to make sure that we will in fact be able to hear cases not just in regard to property and land but perhaps in regard to, involving utilities – of course, in mobile-home communities you often have submetering for electricity, certainly; I'm not so sure about water but probably – to make sure that we have a mechanism by which we can deal with common areas, which include roads, parks, and so forth, snow removal and such like. The way by which we can do that – and to have this not be capped, for example, by a \$50,000 cap, I think, helps to make it more flexible as well so that, in fact, you can have issues that are of less financial cost be resolved through a dispute resolution mechanism.

As well, the coming-into-force date, I think, is something that we needed to deal with – right? – to make sure that we have this available as soon as possible. I believe that moving the coming-into-force date for this particular bill to have it as soon as it is in fact passed and receives royal assent, I think, is a more expeditious way to deal with this because, of course, you know, people, maybe even during this difficult economic and medical emergency we have here in the province, can have access to resolution for potential conflicts in mobile-home communities.

As well, we were looking very carefully to ensure that there are no barriers to individuals who might think: oh, I'm accessing – even if it's a quasi-judicial board or something like that, it's going to cost me, and I don't have money, and I'm just not going to deal with it. To be able to waive fees, especially now, in the midst of the economic difficulties and in the midst of the pandemic, to look for affordable ways by which we can deal with disputes: again, it's not just the money, Madam Chair, but it's a way by which we can provide peace of mind and security for people to know that there's not a financial barrier for them to access a dispute mechanism to deal with an issue, right? I mean, some people, you know, maybe don't necessarily know or are actually in a tight financial spot, so, again, to say, "Hey – you know what? – this is here for you; there's

a potential to waive fees, to make sure it's affordable for people to go ahead and resolve an issue," I think, is the right thing to do.

9:10

I think that, you know, of course, when you're dealing with mobile-home contracts – right? – again, it will often or sometimes be an issue around rental or fees for a site, and I would suspect that issues of conflict would be around those fees for common areas and so forth and/or for rent, for site rent. I think that to have an amendment to this bill that would not have a rental increase while a case is being heard is a reasonable addition to this bill as well because, of course, in fact, many of those disputes would be arising from fees and from rental issues, so to have a freeze on that while it's being resolved, I think, is a fairly reasonable change to make.

Of course, we are not suggesting that people don't access the courts, by any means, in regard to, you know, resolving utilities, submetering, rental rates, and other fees, right? We just want to make sure that people can know that that is an option available to them as well so that it's not like they are being boxed in with a disputes inquiry process but, rather, having the courts available to them as a legal right as a member of our society. We don't want to suggest that we're removing that option from an individual who needs to resolve an issue around rent or metering or things like that but, again, to make sure that all options are open so a person knows that they are confident being supported by this bill. This bill is a way to strengthen the rights of all parties and to know that the courts are an option for someone to be able to get an issue resolved.

Madam Chair, I mean, these are all issues that we need to – I think the basic principle of this bill is good, right? We supported this and advocated for it for quite a number of months, and we were really glad to see that the government has responded. You know, we're looking at having ways by which we can support people renting other types of property. I'm concerned that the deferral of paying rental fees and so forth is ending here in the province. We still see that we're not by any means out of the woods yet in terms of the economic difficulties that people are facing here in the province of Alberta. In fact, I would suggest that it's just emerging, right?

The ban on evictions in a general sense: I think we need to revisit that. I know I have a number of constituents that are on the cusp of catastrophe in regard to potentially being evicted. They don't have adequate income, and they are in a tight spot, quite frankly. You know, the notion that anyone would be facing eviction during this pandemic, I think, is a responsibility that this legislative body needs to deal with, right? We can't be putting people onto the street, compromising not just their having a roof over their head but compromising their overall health and potential to get back to economic self-sufficiency. We know statistically and intuitively that people that become homeless are less able to work and to establish the basic needs of themselves and their families.

I mean, for us to look for ways by which we can mitigate the very negative effects of eviction, especially during this time – if we put a ban on evictions, let's say, last month, what has changed this month that would suggest that we would not do that anymore? You know what I mean? Like, what was a good practice and the right thing to do last month I would suggest is the good and correct thing to do for this month, while all figures and facts would suggest that we're still in the same depth of difficulty in regard to our economic situation here at this time.

I mean, that is sort of a related issue, Madam Chair, in regard to why and how this Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act did come to the floor of this Chamber. It's because we had, obviously, a need to make sure that we had a wider coverage of people in the difficult circumstance, not just during this time but for

always as well. I think we can always look at this moment and look at it as a watershed for making amendments and changes for the better for all Albertans. We know that if we do espouse the belief that all Albertans should be safe and secure in the accommodations that they live in, safe and secure in their ability to access the necessities of life for themselves and their families now, during the pandemic, then certainly that same logic can be applied in a more general way to ensure that Albertans are looked after not just now but moving forward into the future.

This bill generally and this amendment specifically fit into that category. I believe, you know, that we are learning very quickly about how we don't just deal with the immediate triage of the pandemic and economic difficulties but about how we can apply that same principle to good governance and good legislation that can ensure the safety and security of all Albertans for now and for the future as well.

Just by way of conclusion, again, I think that we all share the same sentiment here in this legislative Chamber, that Albertans deserve to be looked after and to be taken care of. We've learned, in fact, as I said before, at the outset of my speech, that when we stand as individuals, that's one thing, but when we stand together, we are stronger. We learn that as a medical principle – right? – that we can't just exclude anybody, because, of course, an individual virus has no differentiation between what station or place or gender or economic circumstance a human being is in. It does not discriminate or differentiate, and similarly we must not discriminate or differentiate between Albertans in different circumstances.

To build a mobile-home tenancy amendment to allow dispute resolution is an extension of the dispute resolution mechanisms and the protections that we would provide for other Albertans in other circumstances. Thus, I must urge all members of this Chamber to consider supporting this amendment to help strengthen a bill that I think we all agree is necessary for now and for the future as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Hon. members, for the sake of *Hansard*, we are on amendment A6. My mistake.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to amendment A6. It deals with this Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020. I think I can start by saying that having an affordable place to call home is important, and every Albertan should be able to have a place that they can call home. According to a 2016 survey there are almost 48,000 Albertans who use mobile homes. That's their home, and that's their safe place.

9:20

While we are debating this piece of legislation – these are important improvements, these are needed improvements, but we still believe that this bill doesn't go far enough, in particular in the circumstances that we are going through – we are going through a global pandemic. It's more important than ever before that every Albertan has a place to call home, that it's affordable, and that they have some certainty of the tenure, that they have this place while they are going through this.

There are many applied research articles and studies out there that show how important it is to have adequate and affordable housing. It has implications for physical health, it has implications for mental health, and it has implications for other needs and necessities of life. It has impacts on the well-being of children living with their parents. When we talk about physical health, I think it's very clear these days, during this pandemic, that people need to have

someplace, an adequate place, an affordable place where they can stay, where they can isolate and keep themselves and their family safe. It's important that people have these places where they can live, where they can stay safe and maintain their physical health.

At the same time, when we talk about mental health – last week in Calgary it was Mental Health Week as well – this pandemic has put a lot of pressure on families, on Albertans, on their lives and their livelihoods in ways that we have not seen before. In such a time, when people are going through this global pandemic – they're trying to stay safe; they're trying to make ends meet – I think that having an adequate and affordable housing option available to them is critically important for their mental health as well.

When we talk about affordable housing, it's important for many other reasons as well. There are studies out there that people shouldn't be spending more than 30 per cent of their income on affordable housing, and the idea behind those studies and the idea behind those benchmarks is that they shouldn't be spending too much on their housing so that they have some money left for their other needs like food, basic needs. If they're paying too much for their housing, they may not be able to provide for their other needs, and that certainly will have impacts on their mental health and well-being. That will have impacts on their children and their well-being and their needs.

When this bill was brought forward, we outlined a number of things that would help improve this bill, and one such thing on the floor right now is this amendment, which essentially is asking this government to make sure that with the changes they're making to this mobile-home tenancies act, people can avail themselves of those changes and people can access those changes right away so that during this pandemic they will have certainty that they have some safe place, that they have some affordable place to call home. That was the reason that we outlined a number of things that would make this bill even better and more useful for those who are living in mobile homes.

One of those things that we proposed was, for instance, that when we are providing this access to residential tenancy dispute resolution services to these mobile-home tenants, that service be able to handle claims which are over \$50,000. Having that flexibility and having access to this is important right now because courts are not dealing with those issues at this point. They are operating on a limited basis. So having these issues go to residential tenancy dispute services will open up an avenue for those living in mobile homes to have their issues addressed and have some certainty that they will have someplace to call home. That's why this amendment is important, that they have that service available to them right away.

Other things will be important for those who are living in mobile homes, and it's true even for many other Albertans. We know that there are many Albertans who are living paycheck to paycheck, and because of this pandemic many have lost jobs. Businesses are not open and operating, so people's finances, Albertans' finances, have been impacted by this pandemic. What we were suggesting here was that when we are making these services available to mobile-home tenants, we should make sure that these services are accessible to them and that we are not putting any additional burdens on them while they're accessing this service.

For instance, right now there is a fee of \$75, I believe, that they will need to pay to access these services. When you're living on a fixed income, especially during these times, I think \$75 can make a huge difference. It can mean groceries for two, three days. So what we are asking is that this service that we are making available to the mobile-home tenants should be made available to them free of cost so that it's not adding anything extra to their finances, so that it's

not putting extra strain on their finances. This service should be available to them free of cost.

Other things that I think are important here are, as I mentioned, that the courts have reduced their operation to only urgent and necessary things. I'm afraid that residential tenancy disputes coming out of mobile homes may not be considered by the courts at this time. So when we are giving access for these tenants to these services, we should make sure that they will be able to move the things that are pending in courts and haven't been scheduled or heard back to residential tenancy dispute services so that these can be resolved in a timely manner during this pandemic, so that they can have some security of tenure, so that they can have someplace to call home.

9:30

Other things we have also suggested when we talk about home. I think ways to access those mobile-home sites are important and utilities and all of those things. It's basically home for those people, so what we are suggesting here is that residential tenancy dispute services be able to deal with all those issues that relate to home and that they are able to deal with other circumstances so that these individuals, these Albertans who are in these sites have a safe place to call home. This amendment will make sure that these services offered by the residential tenancy dispute service are available to them right away, and that will certainly help them to make sure that they have a safe place that they can call home.

These are difficult times for all Albertans, and they are struggling in many different ways because of this pandemic. Having that option available right away to them will reduce the stress, will help them address issues relating to their housing, and will make sure that they can stay safe, will make sure that their families can stay safe, their children can stay safe. So it's important. That's why I urge all my colleagues to vote in favour of this amendment, so that these services are available to these Albertans who need them now, not in the future.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6 on Bill 3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to my colleagues for the opportunity to debate what I think is an important bill as well as an important amendment. Just for clarity, if you would indulge, because I have a few pieces of paper here over the last several weeks, I just want to make sure that I'm speaking to the accurate amendment. They're not labelled on my desk, so would it be possible, if it's not too long, to have it read into the record for us?

The Chair: Yes. Absolutely. Amendment A6 moves that Bill 3, Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020, be amended by striking out section 4.

Ms Hoffman: Excellent. I did have the right piece of paper. Thank you so much.

With regard to section 4 about the date of coming into force being when it receives royal assent as opposed to proclamation, I think that that is a worthwhile initiative and a very useful amendment. I want to thank my colleague the Member for Edmonton-West Heday for bringing that forward. The thing about the proclamation date versus royal assent is that I think it's important that this House is being reconvened to discuss matters of importance, and given that this is something that is seen as an important issue – and I agree. I think it's important that we move matters out of the courts and into

the proper bodies, so when it comes to dispute resolution services, I think that that is far more appropriate. It's been the case for many other residential situations, and I see no reason why it shouldn't apply to mobile-home communities as well. I think we've heard clearly from both sides of this House that mobile-home owners do believe that this is the proper venue for dispute resolutions rather than excessive court fees and tying up the courts and the time that it takes to work one's way through the legal process through the courts. This, of course, would be a different legal process, and it would be one that could be seen as being more cost-effective and more expeditious. I think for those reasons it has earned our support. It also was in our platform that was campaigned on about a year ago, so I believe I also have a mandate to lobby for this in this place.

I think waiting until the time of proclamation: we've seen many times where that can be excessive. It can take a considerable amount of time. I think that there are some bills that have indeed gone on for years before being proclaimed. I know that's not the intent of this, and I doubt it's the intent of any member in this House. We're back here today because we believe this is a matter of importance. The government has reconvened the House because the government wants to see this and other pieces of legislation proceed. With that as the rationale I think it's incredibly important that we then take this legislation and move it forward through this process more quickly. Particularly given the fact that the courts aren't currently sitting, I think that it would be even more beneficial for it to be expedited to not require a proclamation process because we have people who are in situations that definitely need a third party to weigh in, that are leading to things, including home insecurity.

Of course, home insecurity is one of the ways, if we continue to experience it, that people will continue to spread, potentially, COVID-19. We know that that is definitely counter to all of the other initiatives that we as a society should be taking right now to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and, honestly, anyone who lives in our communities with us. We should be making sure that people have an ability to keep a roof over their heads and that they have an ability to continue to live securely without fear that they are going to lose their homes or be in a position of precarity when it comes to their home security. I think it's incredibly useful for us to be able to move up the deadline, and striking section 4 seems to be the most efficient way to do that.

I'd be happy to consider any questions or if there are counterpoints from our colleagues, but I want to remind everyone that RTDRS has been in place for many, many years, that it has already got regulations around it that help govern it. This is simply about allowing a class of homeowners to be able to access it who currently can't, a group of homeowners who currently have been pushed to the courts rather than to the dispute resolution system that they have clearly articulated would be in their best interests. Clearly, the government has heard and the opposition has heard and agrees as well.

I think that this is a simple amendment. I think that it very clearly moves things up to help during a time when we are in a public health crisis and when, arguably, if people do need to be going to the courts, it should be the most urgent situations. I think that it is urgent for people to be able to receive clarity and security around their housing situations. I think we don't need to refer that to the courts, though. We can do it through it through RTDRS, which has served other types of home ownership situations well for many, many years and has the potential to do the same here.

I think that often we've heard stories from people who live in a variety of different housing situations that there is a power imbalance between a landlord and a tenant or somebody who owns the site that your home is on and one who is leasing that site. I think

that it's important that we check that practice, that we check that privilege, and that we allow for fair and unbiased third parties, including the RTDRS, to do their work in a way that protects and creates more balance between both parties. Definitely, I think this bill does that, and that's one of the reasons why I think we shouldn't be slow to enforce it.

Some of my colleagues have talked about the need to waive fees for RTDRS, and I agree with that. I don't think that the amount of money in your pocket should ever determine your access to justice or your access to fair representation, so I certainly support that. We also have heard that rent cannot be increased when cases are being heard. Of course, getting from that process of limbo into the actual hearing of the case piece would certainly help a lot of people who are feeling that they are in a precarious situation, where they don't have the type of agency that their landlord or the owner of the mobile-home community might have.

I think that this is, again, a very fair and reasonable amendment. I think it's something that we've done both when we were in government and at times when the NDP was in opposition. We've brought forward these types of amendments, and we've seen them supported by both sides on more than one occasion. I think that this is an opportunity for us to come together in this House and enact a piece of legislation that, arguably, both sides agree with. Both sides have said that it needs to take place. Now it's just a question of whether or not we choose to do that in a way that acts swiftly or whether we continue to delay, and we are proposing in this amendment a way to act swiftly and to not cause undue lagging between when the bill comes before this House, when the bill is passed, and when the bill actually becomes a law.

9:40

I think that for those reasons this amendment warrants a thumbs-up from both whips and is an opportunity for us to continue to move forward with this legislation in a way that makes us all feel like we've contributed, that we've worked to make it better, and proves to those who are impacted by this legislation that our considerations in this place and having a fair process and having a fair consideration on each stage of a bill can lead to better outcomes for all.

Those are the primary reasons why I am very happy to support this amendment brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-West Henday. I know that many members of this Assembly represent folks who live in mobile-home communities, and I'm sure you've heard from those folks that this is something that should be done in a swift fashion. So I encourage you to take this opportunity to listen to those constituents, to act on their advice and their request, and to vote for this amendment to make sure that we don't delay what is clearly something that all members of this Assembly support, which is access to a fair judicial process outside of the courts through the RTDRS in a fashion that is fair, affordable, and timely.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and hello to all the members who are back in the House today after a little bit of time. Of course, as my colleagues have already discussed, we are on Bill 3, the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020, and specifically on amendment A6. As you've heard from my colleagues, I'll just reiterate that our caucus is in support of Bill 3. We certainly see it as a good first step to support mobile-home owners. However, there are a few things that

we're suggesting through amendments that we think would make the bill even stronger and better.

Of course, amendment A6 is an amendment that does that. Certainly, the MLA for Edmonton-West Henday, the critic for Service Alberta, has talked extensively about this. Really, it is just about a timing issue. It is about making sure, you know, especially during this very difficult time, during the COVID-19 pandemic, that mobile-home owners have access to the residential tenancy dispute process. Of course, this bill does give them that, but it's not until after its proclamation, and the proclamation – I think there's an estimate of it being probably in the fall sometime. But this amendment is asking it to be after royal assent, which of course would be more immediate. It would be soon after the bill is passed through all the levels here in this Legislature. That is what we're asking in terms of an amendment for this bill to make it even stronger and to be accessible and to serve the Albertans who do live in mobile homes.

I think something that I just want to note also is that the MLA for Edmonton-West Henday put together a package of all the amendments that our caucus was bringing forward and gave them in advance to the minister, to the government so that they could review them, in hopes that they would integrate them into legislation or be receptive to our suggestions. That was a step that was taken in hopes of making sure that mobile-home owners are supported. I just want to commend him for that.

As many of my colleagues have already spoken about, certainly housing is fundamental for people. It's actually a human right. When people aren't well housed we know there are many difficulties. Oftentimes we talk about the costs of poverty. People who don't have a home oftentimes have many other challenges, which actually, if we want to look at economic arguments, cost our society more than supporting people to be well housed.

A mobile home is often an opportunity for some people to have home ownership, which they wouldn't normally. However, there have been ongoing challenges with how they can deal with issues they have because generally if they're in a mobile-home park, they don't own the land that their property is on. Those challenges have to be seen in the court system, and that's a very expensive process. Often it takes a long time for it to go ahead, so this bill being brought forward is really a positive thing. Certainly, when we were government, that was something that we had in our platform, too, and that we wanted, so we're very pleased that the government is moving forward on that. But there just are some pieces of it that could be much stronger, of course, talking about amendment A6, by just moving up the date of when it will be implemented so that, you know, mobile-home owners can be supported at an earlier time, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just to continue a bit about how, you know, knowing the situation we're in right now, it's of such significant importance that people have a safe place to live. We're asking people to go out as little as possible, and we are wanting people to self-isolate if they have any kind of symptoms of COVID-19. If people don't have a home, a home that's safe for them and their families, then they can't do that. Of course, then it becomes a public health issue for the rest of our society. So the collective caring for each other is so fundamental.

This bill gives homeowners who may be experiencing some difficulties in their situation some more security. There's more assuredness that the issues that they're experiencing will be dealt with in a timely manner without it being overly expensive. Of course, we know that the court system right now is really seeing very few cases, so they may not have their case heard. The timely application of this bill will make a significant difference for this population, people who live in mobile homes. So I'm just

encouraging the government side to see the significance of that and to also vote in favour of amendment A6.

Of course, there are so many things that need to be done in our province regarding affordable housing. This is one aspect of it. Because sometimes there has been significant neglect in other parts of the system, you know, people are choosing sort of this private market solution for themselves, and that's great. But we also need to make sure that there is affordable housing for people because they are put into dire circumstances, and we know that, unfortunately, in the most recent budget of this government there were absolutely no new capital dollars for affordable housing. Nothing. Plus there was a cut of 24 per cent to the rent supplement program, so this means that people are often precariously housed. They may not be able to afford – they're spending more than the core need for affordable housing. We say that you shouldn't pay more than 30 per cent of your income when you're paying for your rent because, of course, you need other things like food, activities, transportation. So we must make sure that people have access to affordable housing that's not too expensive.

Of course, people have taken it upon themselves and decided to live in mobile homes so that they can have enough money so they can live well. However, when there are difficulties with their landlord, someone who owns that land that the mobile home sits on, that means that they may be again in a difficult situation. They may be at risk of being evicted from that park, and there may be some things that aren't fair about what is going on.

9:50

Currently it's only through the court system, and as we said, that court system is not seeing a lot of these types of cases, so passing this bill and speeding up the implementation of it so that it's after royal assent as opposed to after proclamation will make a significant difference for these folks. You know, we do have so much need for affordable housing in our province. It's really key that folks who've made this choice to live in mobile homes aren't left vulnerable and that we don't have more people who become homeless because of not having safe accommodation to stay in because their landlords aren't dealing with the concerns that they have.

Certainly, you know, there are also fees involved when people have to go through the court system. Having it go through the residential tenancy dispute process is much less expensive, only \$75 for court applications, so that makes a big difference for people. They can look at issues like security deposits or rent deductions, completing repairs, recovery of unpaid rent or utilities, all these things that, you know, may put them in a situation where they may not be allowed to stay in that location anymore.

We know that the eviction ban has been lifted now. It was just till the end of April during COVID-19, and certainly our opposition has asked for that to be extended. People have lost income. People are still having trouble being able to pay for their rent, for their day-to-day basic needs, so it's important that there be some kind of recourse for folks who are in this situation. Amendment A6 would speed up that process so much and take care of so many issues that are currently not being dealt with, and that put them in a very precarious position. Certainly, I mean, we're in support of this bill. It's just that there are these aspects of it that are weak. Again, during the pandemic the importance of bringing it into force, you know, immediately after it has passed this House – I just really would encourage all of my colleagues in the House to vote in favour of this amendment.

There are other aspects of the bill that are also of concern to us. Infrastructure: actually, this is not encompassed within this bill. For example, if the roads on the mobile-home site have big potholes or

the snow removal isn't done and things like that, this bill actually doesn't address that. That's another area that we think could strengthen it, especially when public safety may be at issue. If emergency vehicles can't access people's homes, then that can be a real concern because people may have medical emergencies and need to be taken. If the whole infrastructure, the road system, isn't well maintained – certainly, we've heard loud and clear from many mobile-home owners that this is a key issue for them in the sites where they live, that the roads aren't well maintained. I mean, at this time of year we're not worried so much about snow removal but potholes, and things need to be maintained properly so that people can have timely access to emergency vehicles.

Certainly, again I just want to stress and ask all of my colleagues to really see the importance of moving swiftly on the passing of this with this amendment in place so that mobile-home owners have the opportunity to stay well housed during this very difficult time. During the COVID-19 pandemic we want Albertans to be well housed. The safest place for them to be is at their own home, and without the support for mobile-home owners that this bill gives and that this amendment strengthens, that can't happen.

I would urge all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 3, Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020, specifically to amendment A6, that was brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, that says that "Bill 3, Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020, be amended by striking out section 4."

I want to reiterate that members in our caucus are very supportive of this piece of legislation. It was something that we had in our platform. We're happy to see that the government is taking our lead and looking at this piece of legislation and amending it where it needs to be. When we look at where we're at today, in the middle of a pandemic, I think it's reasonable, the amendment that was brought forward, to suggest that it not wait until proclamation to be implemented, that it happen once royal assent occurs.

I have a beautiful mobile-home community in Edmonton-Castle Downs. It's called Castle View Village. It is in the community of Dunluce. It is just a beautiful place. It has an incredible sense of community. The residents that live there: you feel that connectedness there. It is a place where many residents have lived for many, many years – 20, 30, 40 years – and take pride in their homes. If you were to google it, it says that it's the best mobile-home park in Edmonton and area, and I can attest that it absolutely is true. The pride that is in that community when it comes to the neighbourhood connectedness, the simple aesthetics of the community: it's well-kept; it's beautiful.

But there are issues that occur, and this piece of legislation that we're talking about today allows those residents, the homeowners, to access a system through the residential tenancy dispute resolution service, RTDRS, in a way that is affordable. It's something that right now in this pandemic is timely. We know that right now the court system isn't seeing cases that are nonessential, nonemergent. These type of applications would be considered something that's not going forward at this time. If we looked at the alternative and made it accessible right now, this would give tenants the opportunity to have their day, have their say in a timely, affordable way.

I have a history of working as both a mediator and in the Provincial Court system, seeing both sides of the mediation process,

alternative dispute resolution as well as the court process, which to many can be quite daunting. It's expensive. It's something that is very time consuming. When you're looking at getting a court date, it can be several months down the road. These issues that these people are bringing forward need to be addressed in a timely manner. They have the right to be able to do that. I think that right now we have a simple solution that's been brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-West Henday to be able to make it accessible immediately, when we know that courts aren't sitting for regular matters.

When we talk about dispute resolution and alternatives to court, it allows both parties to come together to have a discussion. The whole intention of mediation is to make sure that it is binding at the end of it, when a resolution has been agreed on; it allows both parties to have a safe, open conversation about what their concerns are; and it provides a conversation that may not have been able to occur because of the power imbalance between the two, perhaps, or just the frustration that has led to that application coming before the parties.

10:00

Often these are situations that are not easily resolved on their own; an intervention of some sort has to occur. When you're advocating for yourself and for your community, to know that there is an opportunity available that isn't as daunting as court is often quite successful. Having parties come together to sit down and have a conversation in a timely manner and get an actual resolution out of the concern is something that is a success. It maintains a relationship between the parties, it's something that's affordable, it allows for community to be advocates on behalf of themselves and their neighbours, and it really, really comes to an outcome that is something that's supported by all parties at the table. To be able to have that stress relief, especially right now, Madam Chair, is something that we're advocating for.

When we talk about affordable housing and we talk about the need for safe housing, especially right now when there is so much going on in the world, and one of the minimum things that we're being asked to do is to stay home, to be able to have a home that is safe and that you're able to self-isolate in is essential. Having that stress of potentially not being able to stay there is quite overwhelming. I've heard from many constituents that are nervous about everyday things that for many years we took for granted, and housing shouldn't be one of them. When it's something that's happening within their home, we should be able to say that we have a process in place, it's easy to access, it's timely to access, and there will be a resolution at the end of it.

Being able to offer this in the middle of a pandemic I believe is the right thing to do instead of waiting until proclamation occurs, which, really, could be at any time that the government decides, is something that we're hearing people aren't interested in at this point. They want reassurance. They want that comfort and that security, knowing that if there is an issue that can't be resolved between the parties, they have a timely answer where they can go and resolve this.

When we are talking about supporting this, I would hope that members on all sides of the House are looking to support this. People in mobile-home communities are asking for this now. They want to see their rights as homeowners heard and to be treated fairly, and it's one thing that can alleviate some of this global stress that's happening, by allowing access in a timely manner.

The community of Dunluce is a wonderful community. It's a family community, and it's about people coming together and showing support. On the weekend the community created a parade. It was something where community members from Dunluce came

together and said: “We want to support each other. We’re in a place where we’re disconnected. We aren’t able to do the things that we would typically do.” So Dunluce residents decided that they wanted to do something to show support in their community. The incredible community came together, created a car parade that allowed all residents from Dunluce to either participate by entering their vehicle in the parade or by simply watching the parade from the comfort of home.

There was a request that had gone out to the community that if you’re watching the parade from home, dress up, have some fun with it, and like the true spirit of people in Edmonton-Castle Downs and Dunluce, they showed up. They were in their lawn chairs on their front steps. They had costumes on and banners. The whole purpose of this parade was to feel that sense of community that is clearly established in the mobile-home community in Dunluce. It speaks to the willingness to overcome and to support each other.

When it comes to being able to advocate and get some of the things that you need in order to have a safe place to live, this is something that Edmonton-Castle Downs does without question. We come together. We support it. I think being able to do that for my community and for communities all across the province right now is essential, to be able to say: we’ve heard your concerns; we’re listening; we care; and we’re going to do something that is going to have an impact right now. To be able to change the process, a simple process change, being able to change it from proclamation to royal assent is an easy resolution to this. It allows timely access to people that are asking for access right now, especially when we’re looking at the way that the pandemic is impacting so many services and so many systems.

The court system, unfortunately, is one of those systems that has been incredibly impacted, so I could only assume that there is going to be an effect going forward on what that court system will look like postpandemic. I think it’s a fair assessment to think that things that were put off today are going to be first up, so if you’re making a new application, the likelihood of you getting your application before the courts in a timely manner is probably very unlikely. This allows for access now in a timely manner, that would speak to Albertans to show them that this is something that we value and that we see as important. When we have a program and a system that is in place as an alternative to court, why wouldn’t we support it immediately and look at changing the dates simply to allow access? I think it sends a strong message to our community, to our mobile-home owners, and to Albertans that they’re important and that we’ve heard you.

During this pandemic when we’re looking for ways to alleviate stress, I think this is clearly a way that that can occur, and it’s something that I would suggest is a reasoned amendment. It’s something that isn’t asking for much. It’s something I believe that if government wants to show that this is the intention – they brought the legislation forward. I think it’s wonderful. Let’s just change the dates and look at allowing access to the community in a more timely manner.

I would be curious, and I’m interested to hear further debate on this, to hear government’s opinion on this and to see if there’s something that perhaps would prevent this from going forward. I know that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday has done robust consultation, and members from my caucus have been in touch with individuals from all over the province talking about this issue, and we’ve heard support for it. So I’m curious that if there’s a reason to not support it, what that could be. I haven’t heard anything that would indicate that this isn’t an amendment that could be supported by all members of the House.

I know, Madam Chair, that you have mobile-home communities in your riding, and I would assume that they’ve been reaching out

to you and that they’re in support of this piece of legislation. I think that it’s something that likely every member in this House has heard from constituents about, and I would suggest that the majority are in support of this piece of legislation.

It’s not changing the structure of the legislation. It’s not changing any of the meat of this legislation. It’s a simple date change, from proclamation to royal assent, which would allow access immediately. Once that royal assent occurs, it gives tenants the opportunity to access this service outside of court.

I think that when we’re looking at ways to alleviate stress, ways to alleviate concern, financial burdens, those types of things during this time, this is an easy solution to those very, very real and legitimate concerns that many homeowners are facing right now. I would hope that when we’re looking at ways to deal with issues and disputes in communities, we’re on the side of getting it resolved quickly, that we want to make sure that it’s done fairly, timely, and in a way that is accessible to all parties. I would suggest that even having this amendment come through now, it could perhaps create a better space for residents to have those conversations and talk about what the issues are and what the needs are as opposed to having to go through the court process still.

10:10

Like I’d mentioned, the simple act of making a court application can be quite daunting. All of the stuff that is affiliated with court can be quite overwhelming, and it might prevent individuals from applying. I’m very pleased to see that we’re moving towards alternative dispute resolutions. Knowing that this is something that is a lot more friendly for people to engage in, it makes sense, and having it accessible now also makes sense, Madam Chair.

I would strongly hope that all members in this Chamber will support this reasoned amendment, will stand up and vote yes and say, “You know, Albertans, we hear you, we’re with you, and we want to make sure that we’re doing our absolute best to reduce strain during this pandemic,” with so much that’s going on, to be able to say, “We value your ability to have a resolution in a timely manner, to get your important matter heard.”

It’s not saying that – it might still have to go to court. There’s still that possibility where if something goes through this process, it could still end up in the court system. But let’s let them have that opportunity now, to be able to speak to it, to be able to acknowledge that this is something that’s happening for them. To create that conversation and that ideal resolution would be the best-case scenario.

With that, Madam Chair, I will end my comments with just a simple request that all members really consider amendment A6 and voting in favour of it. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6 to Bill 3?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

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

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

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Eggen	Goehring	Sabir
Ganley	Hoffman	Sigurdson, L.

Against the motion:

Allard	Jones	Schow
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Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Turton
Getson	Lovely	van Dijken
Glasgo	McIver	Walker
Gotfried	Reid	
Totals:	For – 6	Against – 14

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Chair: We are now back on the main bill, Bill 3. Are there any speakers wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad I leaped to my feet with haste to ensure that we have a chance to just summarize, perhaps, the full landscape of what Bill 3 does try to achieve. As I said, I think I've got a feeling in this room and between our caucuses that we do see support for this bill in principle. I'm a little bit disappointed to see that we didn't manage to get those very practical amendments through, you know, but that shouldn't deter us from ensuring that the mobile-home tenancies act is in fact amended to allow disputes to be handled by the residential tenancy dispute resolution service – right? – otherwise known as RTDRS. In the land of acronyms in which we reside, this is certainly one of the longer ones, but it doesn't exactly stick in your mind as well because it doesn't spell anything as an acronym, which I always like when that happens.

10:30

Anyway, we know that currently disputes between tenants and landowners from mobile-home sites and the land that the home sits upon categorically require court intervention. We're certainly not presuming that this is not an option for people to access the courts if need be, but this is just otherwise providing another mechanism to allow dispute resolution without the courts.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

We heard from both myself and a number of my colleagues that, you know, this, I think, is just perhaps a way to provide security and to provide some alternative way by which to work through a dispute, right? In a way sometimes courts and court procedures, again, sort of imply a lot of money somehow, so people shy away from them, and they imply as well an antagonistic relationship, which some people shy away from as well. So by empowering the RTDRS, we are providing not just a legal option but a more, I guess, human and perhaps secure and acceptable way to resolve issues that can happen. We know that court applications can be expensive just to even walk through the door. It can be a hundred bucks to two hundred bucks. We can make that more affordable as well by using the RTDRS route.

We know that disputes happen as part of human interaction. That's globally something we know, but we can make it so it doesn't have to be something that turns into a battle, right? We see issues – I know that in a previous drawing of my constituency I did have a mobile-home site in my constituency, and we would see both the tenants and sometimes the landlord coming to us to, you know, talk about some issues like around security deposits, deductions, completing repairs, talking about picking up unpaid rent, utilities and so forth. So by having that in place, I think that we can work through this and create a less antagonistic platform by which people can resolve these issues.

You know, I certainly appreciate that this UCP government has recognized this as an issue – right? – which means they are capable as a government of showing evolution and listening on the ground if they choose to do so. We've been certainly advocating for this for

a while, and now to see it up on the Order Paper and potentially with an expeditious signing to bring this into law, I think there are a lot of people that would really appreciate it. We know that we certainly did put it in our platform to talk about providing mobile-home owners with additional rights to resolve disputes without having to go to court. Here we are today having this take place.

You know, we know that you can't do everything all the time in government or in life in general, but here we are with an opportunity to actually get the job done, so I'm pretty happy about that. We know that there are probably more than 50,000 people at least that live in mobile-home sites in our province, probably more than that by now, and we know that it's probably in the back of all of those people's minds that they have a way by which to resolve issues in an expeditious manner if they do come up.

We have to make sure that when we do make a resolution dispute committee amendment like this, we make sure that we staff and build on that. I think that's a very important detail to consider. It's always just one thing to make laws, Madam Chair, but it's another thing to make sure that they are both enforced and that the bureaucracy of making something like this happen is well supported, right? I just want to put a caveat into the potential that if we do manage to pass the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020, we do in fact make sure that we pay for that and staff it properly.

We know that we've seen some cuts to Service Alberta here since this government has assumed responsibility, and I just don't want to see us passing bills, in general and this one specifically, on paper but not having the means by which to support it. That would be my one free bit of advice – right? – for this government: to make sure that we in fact provide staff and support if someone does want to or when they do want to access the RTDRS, that there's someone behind the door that will actually help to get the job done.

We know as well that we're in a very fluid situation, Madam Chair, in regard to, you know, the economy here and, of course, with the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to make sure that people are not just supported but know in their hearts and can feel secure in being supported for their residence, and that includes mobile-home sites.

Sorry, Mr. Chair; I called you Madam Chair. That was not a grave error, but I was just not looking, I guess.

I just, you know, want to reiterate that at this juncture in our history we need to make sure that, for example, people know that they won't be evicted from their residence during this difficult economic time plus the compounding challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that the precondition to helping people, the most basic precondition, is to ensure that they have a stable place to live. I see, just in my own anecdotal experience, that in these past few weeks here in the Edmonton area we see a lot more people that clearly do not have a stable place to live, right? As a result, then, we are less able to provide other services for them. We're less able to provide the food and medical attention that they might need and other social supports as well.

I don't think it's a coincidence, Mr. Chair, that when we do have an emergency – you know, we are again faced with a very grave example with the flooding in Fort McMurray and in other communities around the province – the first thing that people look to get done is to ensure the immediate security of individuals and to provide them with food and medical attention. Right from the beginning as well they ensure that there is a secure place for people to live, right? Of course, with a roof over your head and a place to be, then other services can be provided, and that's the beginning of the road to recovery.

I would suggest that this Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act is sort of like an extension of that basic principle that we are very good at providing. I would suggest that when we

look through the last number of emergencies that we've dealt with here in the province of Alberta, from the floods in 2013 and then the fires in 2016 and the flooding now in different communities in our province, compounded with, of course, the more global emergency of COVID-19 and the economic difficulties that we've had, you know, we have by necessity become quite good at triaging what is necessary for people to cope with these things in terms of the basic necessities that they need. And we've found clear as a bell that one of the most basic and important necessities is to have a place to live.

10:40

The Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act is an extension of that recognition. If I can just reiterate most emphatically, you know, the lessons that we learn around the necessity of the absolute right for a person to have a place to live in an emergency situation must be extended as lessons that we can use generally in our society to provide a more stable and better place for people in general, right? Sometimes emergencies teach us lessons that we must remember and keep and build on when we move through and past the immediate emergency that's before us.

You know, again, this amendment act helps us to build a resolution mechanism for people living in mobile-home sites. I think it provides us a reminder that we will build structures that will move past the immediate emergencies that we're living and coping with now, and we must make sure that we learn the lessons from that emergency period to build better protections and so forth to ensure that people have a place to live, that they can resolve issues around that place to live when they arise and that always we are building better legislation that allows us to provide for the safety and the security of Albertans regardless of their economic circumstance, their geographic location, and other differences that we have.

We have much more in common with each other than we have differences. I think that this Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act is, you know, just a small taste of progressive legislation that we can build here in the Legislature between parties that takes aside the differences that we might have but looks for things that we indeed share and have in common.

With that, Mr. Chair, I would again recommend to all MLAs here in the Chamber to support Bill 3. I mean, we made a valiant effort to make some amendments. You know, it's not as though when an amendment doesn't quite make it through at any given time, that it doesn't have some utility in the future, right? So I'm looking for some of the seeds of the ideas that we did bring forward here with each of the amendments we did for Bill 3. I hope that might just provide some direction and some thought for perhaps making those changes in the future as the issue becomes more clear, as people use the actual RTDRS as needed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to say a couple of words at this stage of the debate for Bill 3. I look forward to hearing other perspectives to help us to understand what is the best way to go here this morning.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are any other members wishing to speak to Bill 3? The Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to third reading of Bill 3, the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020. I think it's an important piece of legislation that deals with the housing options for Albertans. As my colleague from Edmonton-North West mentioned, mobile homes are one of the affordable

housing options that Albertans avail, almost 50,000 of them. Changes that are brought forward with this piece of legislation, an important one – and as my colleague mentioned, we also tried to make certain amendments that, in our view, would have improved this piece of legislation, but it is what it is. Still, we believe that it's an important piece of legislation that will make sure that mobile-home owners and tenants have access to the residential tenancy dispute resolution service and will be able to bring their disputes in a more timely manner before this RTDRS and get them resolved.

At this point the disputes between tenants and the landowners of mobile-home sites require court intervention, and we do know that court processes are more technical, are lengthier, and also cost more than what it would cost to bring a matter before the residential tenancy dispute resolution service, so it's a good first step that this piece of legislation will allow these landowners and tenants to bring their matters before the residential tenancy dispute resolution service and get them resolved in a more timely fashion.

This piece of legislation will allow RTDRS to handle disputes and issues that relate to security deposits, rent deductions, completing repairs, and the recovery of unpaid rent and utilities, but we raise these concerns that there are still concerns that the residential tenancy dispute resolution service will not be able to deal with the sale of abandoned mobile homes, and they will not be able to deal with issues like who will occupy the mobile homes, for instance, surviving spouses, partners, those issues and any issues relating to remedies which are over \$50,000. These issues will still have to go to the courts. But there will be some issues that can be dealt with by the residential tenancy dispute resolution service, which is a good thing and which will make it easier for the tenants and landowners to get their disputes settled, but certain improvements could have been made. I think it's a choice that government made. They didn't accept the amendment to that effect.

As was indicated by my colleague, it is something that was also in our platform, and that's why we are supporting this. It's the right thing to do. But there are certain other things that could have been included in this piece of legislation which would have made things a lot easier for these homeowners, these landowners, and these tenants; however, those amendments were not entertained. While we are going through a serious public health crisis and pandemic that has impacted every aspect of our life, it has also impacted all workplaces, including operations at courthouses.

10:50

I think this bill will have two things I want to highlight. It will make sure, on one hand, that owners and tenants have timely access to a dispute resolution process which will be simpler than the court process and relatively cheaper than the court process. At the same time, I think that by taking these disputes out of the court process, we can make sure that court time is reserved for issues of a more complex and urgent nature. In that sense it's a good step that will help both the tenants and the court system as well.

As was indicated earlier, affordable housing is an issue in our province. There are still almost 50,000 Albertans who use a mobile home as an affordable housing option, and those individuals who rely on the availability of this affordable housing do not have unlimited income. They're usually living on limited income, and every little bit of money is important; it counts. We suggested that this process be made available for free. However, that amendment also didn't go through, but it's important for a number of reasons. One, when we add these fees, these fees add up, and at the end of the day that impacts their bottom line, impacts their ability to provide for their other needs. It impacts their ability to provide for their families, their ability to provide for their children.

When we add those fees, they certainly impact the bottom line of those who are relying on these sites for affordable housing options, so we should always be looking at all the aspects of the things that we add on, all the fees that we are putting in place, at how they will impact Albertans. In this case we believe that it will impact those Albertans. It will impact their ability to bring forward these disputes. Making these changes is important. In theory, certainly, these are making things easier, and they are making these processes easier, but if they are not able to pay these fees, if they are not able to access, then I think it will be of no avail to them. That was the reason that we urged government to consider not having these fees in place. That will ensure that they have access to justice, that they have access to these processes. Having that access will not impact their bottom line. It will not impact their ability to provide for their family and their children.

Other important things within this piece of legislation are that, as I indicated, during this pandemic, like every other workplace, the court system is also operating at reduced capacity. They are only dealing with issues that are of an urgent nature, issues that cannot wait, and it's quite possible – I haven't checked the exact list, but I do not think that this will be something that courts will entertain at this time. That's why we're suggesting that we need to make sure that when we're making these changes, we have provisions in place so that were some landlord, some tenant to have brought before the courts some issue relating to mobile homes and that issue hasn't been heard, is still pending, is yet to be scheduled, they'll be given the ability to move their matter back to RTDRS, residential tenancy dispute resolution service.

Again, that would have the impact of taking workloads from the court and giving it to RTDRS, where it can be dealt with in a more simplified and expedited fashion as compared to the courts, and it would have spared court time for more urgent matters. This legislation doesn't go that far, and there will still be matters that could have been dealt with by the residential tenancy dispute resolution service that court will be asked to deal with once they open. There is still, I guess, time for government to consider those things and make those changes so that we are providing this option to tenants and mobile-home site owners to deal with their issues in a more expedited fashion.

Also, there are issues relating to utilities and submetering. These sites, these homes are just homes of Albertans like any other home. My colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs mentioned that the community looks just like another neighbourhood, another community. Although I don't have a mobile site in my riding, towards Calgary-East there is a mobile park site, and there is also one on 16th Avenue. I have visited the one on 16th Avenue. It's just home for these people, and I think they should be able to have access to all the amenities that are available in any other neighbourhood, which will include electricity and other utility submetering. That's why it was important that RTDRS be able to deal with these issues, because these things are part and parcel of any living arrangement, any housing arrangement that should have been dealt with.

There are many things that are left for the regulations. I want to highlight some of them. I think it would have been better to provide certainty to Albertans, provide certainty to landowners, provide certainty to tenants. What's included and what's not included: for instance, the Lieutenant Governor in Council still has the authority to make regulations about "the kinds of applications [and] disputes . . . that are required to be referred to a court by the Dispute Resolution Service." I think the legislation could have been more specific in identifying the issues that are part and parcel of these housing arrangements. If there was more detailed consultation with those communities and even with the court system, we could have

easily identified things, disputes and issues, that need to be dealt with by the residential tenancy dispute resolution service and issues that in some cases may need to be dealt with by court services.

11:00

It also says things like:

respecting the circumstances in which the Dispute Resolution Service

- (i) may refuse to accept an application . . . or
- (ii) may refer to a court an application to the Service.

That will be decided with the regulation. Again, not having those details also creates uncertainty on what kind of disputes they will be able to bring forward.

More importantly, I think they didn't specify – they left it to regulations – about the powers and duties of tenancy dispute officers. If we look at the Residential Tenancies Act, in general when powers are assigned, the language used will be that anything within the act or any matters falling within the purview of the legislation will be dealt with by the administrative body who is charged with dealing with disputes under that legislation. But here the government has left those powers to be determined in regulation.

Also, one of the important things when you bring any dispute before the courts, when you bring any dispute before an administrative body: I think you need to know what your options are and what remedies you can seek. That is important. In some cases, I guess, when we talk about the court system, there is a whole lot of jurisprudence about remedies and how you calculate that, how you seek that. Here I think this piece of legislation is not clear at all on what remedies the tenancy dispute resolution service may be able to offer or what remedies those dispute resolution service officers are authorized to order. These are very important things that are left to the regulations.

Again, Albertans will not have that certainty of knowing what they can ask for when they bring their matters before the RTDRS. Unless we have regulations in place, we will not be able to see how it will help those Albertans and how it will impact their ability to resolve their disputes.

Another important matter that is left to the regulations is respecting limitation and restriction on the dispute resolution service's authority to order a remedy and respecting any terms and conditions that may be included. Again, I think that if we look at the overall scheme of this legislation, it will appear that the government made a choice here. They, on one hand, are making sure that these mobile-home tenants and landowners are able to bring forward their matters before this administrative body, but they left anything relating to the process, to remedies, anything relating to the powers of those officers – they left everything to regulation, where cabinet will decide what these remedies can be and what . . .

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 3? The Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair – Mr. Chair. Pardon me.

The Acting Chair: It happens a lot.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah, it does happen a lot. I appreciate the fluidity of the table and the fact that people need to sub in and out. Sometimes my brain isn't as quick to catch up with the subs, as the people clearly are, and act on them.

I want to take a minute to say, first of all, that I'm glad that this bill is before the House today. I think that this is an important piece

of legislation. There are a few things that I wish it would deal with that I want to walk through, and then I want to talk about why I think it's still worth voting for, because I certainly do.

The things that I think it should have been dealing with include disputes over \$50,000. We know that these probably aren't the norm, but to deny somebody access to a fair and expeditious judicial process through the RTDRS because the concern might be in excess of \$50,000, things like road maintenance or snow removal – I think it would have been beneficial if we would have raised the cap or eliminated the cap for RTDRS.

I think that we should have had it come into effect immediately. I think that there are a lot of people who would benefit from this if it were something that were in place tomorrow or as quickly as this bill is through the process. I think that we should be able to move things that are currently in the courts to RTDRS to provide for a more efficient process, especially given the fact that the courts aren't sitting today. I think that it should be free. I don't think that there should be the \$75 fee. Although it might not be considered onerous for some, it certainly is onerous for many, and I don't think that justice should have a price.

I also think that while cases are in the process of being heard and considered, there shouldn't be an ability for a landlord to increase rent. I also believe that issues of submetering and utilities should have been considered in this bill and that RTDRS should have been given the mandate to be able to address those concerns.

I think those pieces would have made this bill substantially better, but I think it is a move in the right direction. I think this is an improvement over the status that we have today when it comes to disputes in mobile-home communities, and for that reason, the fact that it is better than the status quo, I think that we should be supporting this.

To summarize, I think that the bill, with regard to amendments to the mobile-home tenancy act and the fact that RTDRS is even a factor at all, is a move in the right direction. Again, I think that putting in an arbitrary cap at \$50,000, making it come into effect at probably a far later date than many would want, and having a fee are areas that should have been addressed. I think that fees for the RTDRS are \$75 while court applications typically are, you know, up to \$200. So, again, this is an improvement, but I think it still doesn't go as far as I would have liked to have seen.

I think that the RTDRS can refer cases to the courts. I think that's good. I think it should have been able to happen the other way as well, that the court should have been able to refer cases back to the RTDRS, because I think it would have been a benefit to the court system, of course, especially given that there is already, many would say, a significant demand on the courts. We see a number of folks wait far too long to see their time in court, and of course with the shutdown period that's going to mean that there are even more cases that have entered that backlog than there were just a few weeks ago. I think that we really missed an opportunity for us to act in a way to take some of the load off the courts, give more justice to voters, regular folks who are living in mobile-home communities throughout our province.

As my colleague from Edmonton-North West, formerly the Member for Edmonton-Calder, said, just because something gets voted down in this place doesn't mean that the idea is dead. I sincerely hope that there are people in caucus who have heard some of our concerns here and who will consider digging a little bit deeper when this bill does eventually make its way through the Assembly and will consider pushing this again to the minister, to cabinet, and to get what I think are fair and reasonable ideas an opportunity for reconsideration. I understand that they weren't given the thumbs-up by the whip today, but I hope that that doesn't mean that these ideas are dead. I do think that many of us in this place have heard these concerns, many of us in this place want to

make sure that we make the justice system as efficient as possible and have the fewest financial barriers to folks who are trying to access it, and I think that those would be good values for us to continue to raise in our respective caucuses in the days that follow the closing of this bill.

11:10

Feel free to bring them up as a private member's bill later and take full credit for them. I know that we've heard that offer from the now Minister of Transportation when he was sitting on this side. He said: feel free to steal all my good ideas and claim them for your own. I want to offer the same back to the Minister of Transportation and to the entire government caucus. I think that good ideas don't belong with one party or the other, as is evident from this bill. This bill wasn't in the UCP platform; it was in the NDP platform. Clearly, somebody or multiple people over there said that we should move on this, and I say: kudos; that's good. We have other great ideas in our platform, too, if you want to steal them. I encourage you to give it a quick read or a longer read if you want to. We've certainly got some time to read a variety of interesting pieces of literature these days, and I think it is worth a read.

That being said, I am happy to support this. I wish I could have been even more happy to support it, with some of those amendments having been considered, but today, this morning, is not the day for amendments to pass, on this bill anyway. Let's hope that that isn't the state as we continue to move forward as I know that there are many ideas on both sides of this House worthy of debate, consideration, and approval by all members. I think that we have an opportunity here. I know that when I talk to grade 6 students about the role of MLAs, I say that the number one job, of course, is representing your constituents and bringing forward your best ideas. I hope that that is always the case for every single one of us and that we consider good ideas no matter where they come from.

With that, I am happy to cede my time that remains on this debate and say that I am happy to support Bill 3, Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020, at this current stage. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm rising to speak on the main bill, Bill 3, Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020. Certainly, this bill is a step forward, and as was just said by my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, this was something that was in our platform, and I'm pleased the UCP government has taken to move on this also. Certainly, what this bill is about is, really, giving some affordable access to not having to go to the courts whenever you have a difficulty with your landlord. Of course, because of the unique situation in mobile-home parks, where people don't generally own the land that their home is on, you can see how fundamental this would be. Oftentimes people are looking for an affordable option for home ownership.

Also, there are other good reasons to own a mobile home. Certainly, I grew up in the north, in the Peace River area of our province, and many of my friends lived in mobile-home parks. It made sense oftentimes because maybe there wasn't housing available or there wasn't affordable housing in the town, so many people did take up that option, and it served them well. It shouldn't be that because they're choosing this option and because of that unique situation, they don't have access to an affordable system of dispute resolution.

It's very important that the government move on this. Certainly, our caucus is very pleased that this is happening. As we've said,

too, there are many things that we would like to suggest to strengthen it. Unfortunately, the government doesn't seem to also be agreeing with us about that. I mean, in our current situation we're in a pandemic, and access to the courts isn't really an option now, and that could be putting people housed in these mobile-home parks in a precarious situation because of some of the issues that they have to deal with to live there, stressed, perhaps, by the threat of eviction. We know that the government did bring in a moratorium, really, on evictions because of COVID-19, but that is now over. I guess it was over on April 30, so landlords once again can evict people, and that includes mobile-home parks. So that is a concern.

Certainly, at this exact time we need to have people staying in their own homes because we know that that's the safest place for them. We know that that's our first defence against COVID-19. So the timely implementation of this legislation after it has been passed, meaning immediately, is certainly one of the amendments we brought forward, and we do recommend that this government do that. But they have voted that down. Sort of to facilitate just working collaboratively with the government, I know that the MLA for Edmonton-West Henday, who's the critic in this area, did put forward the amendments in advance to the minister so that they could consider them and incorporate them, and unfortunately that hasn't happened.

I want to also just talk more about what really is underneath this and what is so important about this legislation and about making sure that Albertans have affordable accommodation in our province. I mean, I guess I'm just saying once again that this is even more evident to us during a time of global pandemic, where we are impacted by this deadly coronavirus, that is hurting countries all around the world and taking lives, obviously, much too soon.

We know that in Edmonton – I'm going to talk Edmonton-specific for a moment – there are about 10,000 people on wait-lists for affordable housing. That means that these are people who actually qualify, according to, you know, where the bar is set for them, to have access to affordable housing, yet they can languish on that list for years because there is a score that is set. Sort of the way it's done is that a score is given to anybody, and the people in most need are determined by that score, so those people rise to the top. There are some people who never rise to the top, yet they qualify because their income is eligible. We know that for core housing need, it's 30 per cent of your income. You shouldn't be spending more than that on housing.

Again, here in Edmonton we have 10,000 people who have qualified and are on wait-lists who aren't getting housing. That means that they're likely precariously housed in homes or in suites where perhaps there aren't enough bedrooms, where there may be some security/safety issues. Maybe they're just staying with a friend – we talk about that oftentimes as couch surfing – or perhaps indeed they are homeless, so they're utilizing the shelter system and don't have access to sort of their own home at all.

So this is a significant issue in our province, and some people, I believe, on this wait-list are looking for their own solutions. Because it's more affordable than purchasing, like, a home that's not in a mobile-home park, they would look at purchasing one and then hoping to have secure housing. However, sometimes they're in situations where it's not secure, so that is why it's so important that this bill be passed, and again I'll just say that it would be much better with the amendments we brought forward. They would strengthen it, would give them even more support. People may be in jeopardy of losing their homes, and we, of course, don't want that.

If we talk about Calgary now, certainly the city of Calgary says that there are 33,000 people in core housing need in that city. That is a very significant number of people, and we know that the need

is just tremendous. Across Alberta we say 200,000. Those are actually Stats Canada's 2019 stats, but I can just imagine that that number is going way up because of the pandemic and people losing jobs, not being able to pay their rent, not being able to pay their mortgage. I mean, people are experiencing more and more hardship because of this extraordinary time that we're living in.

11:20

It's, you know, very distressing to me that despite the significant need in our province, this government has really chosen to ignore the affordable housing sector. There was absolutely nothing in the most recent budget for capital dollars to invest in affordable housing. The rent supplement program was cut by 24 per cent. That's a significant cut in a time when there is significant need, so it makes no sense. It makes no sense.

So this is a small step in improving some security, safety, well-being. If you feel that your home isn't secure or if you're in jeopardy of being evicted, that places a significant strain on someone's mental health and the stress that that family may be experiencing, especially with COVID-19 on top of that. I mean, I really am concerned for people who are in need of affordable housing, people who are in difficult situations in mobile-home parks where they can't have their issues addressed.

It's very clear that there is so much need, and this government really needs to step up and support Albertans because we know that not only is it a fundamental human right that gives people dignity, but it also saves money. We know that when people are well housed, then it's going to cost less in other systems: in our health system, in the criminal justice system, in the social services system, in all our systems. We know that it costs less to actually house a family well than it does to cut in those areas, in those programs. It's just going to be in a different budget line. That's, you know, a considerable concern for me. Having been a social worker for over 30 years and certainly being on the front lines and watching vulnerable families struggle because of inadequate housing and just the ramifications of that, I can certainly attest to how important it is to invest in this sector.

I'm very proud of when our government invested \$1.2 billion in affordable housing back in 2017 and created an affordable housing strategy for our province, which went a long way to increasing the number of units and access to affordable housing in our province. Of course, that made a big difference although there's a deep hole to fill. There's still so much more to do, and I just really, you know, beseech this government to see the importance of that, that Albertans are really suffering and that if they are precariously housed, if they don't have good accommodation, that has significant issues for all parts of their lives. Sometimes there's so much instability in your housing situation that it's hard for you to keep a job, or children struggle more in school, or they have higher health concerns because of poor housing.

Of course, what this bill does is that it creates more security for people in mobile homes and does support them, so I'm really grateful to the government for stepping up to do this. I again will say that we would like it to be strengthened through our amendments. But we know that this is a step in the right direction, and we appreciate that.

With those comments, I will take my seat.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 3?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 3, Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Bill 8

Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act

The Acting Chair: We're on amendment A1 to Bill 8. Any members wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to ensure that I'm speaking to the right amendment. I believe it's the one that I moved on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View with regard to striking out "December 31" and replacing it with "July 1." I just want to confirm that I'm in the right place.

The Acting Chair: It says:

MLA Ganley to move that Bill 8, Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act, be amended in section 22 by striking out "December 31, 2020" and substituting "July 1, 2020."

Ms Hoffman: That's great. Thanks so much.

I just want to speak very briefly to where we were at when we left off. Reviewing the *Hansard* from the evening of April 8, it was actually just before 3 a.m. on the 9th technically, I believe, when the Premier rose to speak to this amendment, and I'm glad to remind myself and all members of this Assembly of what he said. To paraphrase – I don't need to read all of *Hansard* into the record, of course; we all have access to it – and to focus on a piece towards the end, he said:

Madam Chair, I have no opposition to this motion. I'm happy to support this to move forward the application of part 3 of the bill to July 1. Sure. Let's get together and force the courts to gear up and apply that more quickly.

And then he goes on to talk about the other pieces of the bill as well.

Having heard the Premier as well as the Minister of Advanced Education speak in support, I think it's certainly a positive amendment. Thank you to my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View and to all members who debated this expediting of the process. I think this is an example of how we have an ability in this place to bring forward ideas to help all Albertans, and having received support for the amendment from the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education and, I'm sure, others, I'm confident that we will all be able to support this amendment and move forward, ensuring that the protections outlined in that section, part 3 of the bill, move forward quickly.

I think that rushing to pass something in this place – I don't believe that it has been rushed now. I think we have had an opportunity to consult with a variety of stakeholders over the last few weeks. I think that's a good and fair process. I know that we proposed committee. I think that second best to committee is the opportunity for all members to reach out and speak to stakeholders, and I think we have had that opportunity now through this last little bit.

I think that there were a few ways that we could have tweaked this bill in other ways to make it even better, but I think this one is a good one. I'm pleased to have had the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education speak to it in support, and I look forward to all of us being able to vote, hopefully unanimously, on this amendment in the minutes or hours to come.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to get a chance to be on the record in favour of this amendment. Obviously, it's my amendment, so I guess you could presume that, but I don't think I've spoken to it. I think the reason why this is incredibly important is – certainly, the government members have gotten up repeatedly, some of them very angrily, to complain that we wanted 48 hours to contact stakeholders about this bill before we made final agreement, which I don't think was an unreasonable request. The Member for Calgary-West seemed extremely, extremely angry about that request for 48 hours.

I guess it's my view that if this is as urgent as the government members say – I do concur that this is something that's happening now. We ought to act expeditiously on something that's happening now. That's a very valid point on their part although I still think that saying – you know, you've been in government for a year. I think that giving us 48 hours to contact stakeholders is not an unreasonable request. If it is the case that this is very, very urgent, then we ought to move the in-force date forward because the in-force date in this case is working on the part of the bill that allows – I don't want to say the substance because all of it has substance to it, but I think that these orders are probably the sort of primary mechanism by which the bill will function.

Certainly, it's good to have the ability to bring a civil suit, but not everybody can bring a civil suit, right? It's expensive. You need a lawyer. It's complicated. Often the individuals involved in this will be marginalized in some way or are even individuals who are here on temporary foreign worker permits. They may not still be here two years later when the matter would actually come to trial. That is a good remedy. It's good to have that remedy available, but a large portion of the individuals caught by this act will not be able to exercise that remedy. I think the orders are really the relevant piece of it, and I think given that, it is worth while for us to move up the time frame on the orders if it is indeed as urgent as the government has said.

11:30

I have additional comments to make with respect to the main bill, but I suspect we will be going back there shortly, and I can make those comments at that time. All I want to do is reiterate the fact that we certainly support this bill; we support the intent of the bill. We have now had the opportunity to speak to stakeholders, most of whom got back to us after the long weekend, which is not surprising. Many people take time off at Easter, and that's why we couldn't get a response from them right away. Generally the views have been supportive. The concerns expressed still have to do with the fact that the committee is not in the bill and the fact that there's no clear money earmarked for this, which there needs to be.

Having heard that response, I think we're in favour of the bill, and I hope that all members will support this amendment, which, again, is intended to move the in-force date on those protection orders sooner so that it's in July rather than in December of this year.

With that, I will wrap up.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not specifically on this bill, but I just wanted to seek clarification. If we are having standing votes

here on this amendment at this stage, is it implicitly one-minute bells, or do we have to ask for that?

The Acting Chair: For clarification, we will automatically go to one-minute bells.

Mr. Eggen: Automatically. Yeah, that's what we thought. Just wanted to check, right? Okay.

The Acting Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the question. [interjections] Oh, I'm sorry. I had somebody in the way.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. Sorry about that.

I think we need to have this discussion on this bill. Obviously, this is a very important bill. This is something that should have been taken care of, of course, years ago. It's something that's a world-wide problem. I think we've gone back and forth here. We're working with this amendment right now on Bill 8, Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act. We, of course, want this to happen as soon as possible. We want to make sure that these people have the protection they need as soon as possible. We campaigned on this in our election campaign, that we were going to do something regarding human trafficking and protecting the survivors. So we campaigned on this. This was something we felt was very important to bring forward. The Premier has worked on this his entire career in politics, trying to protect the survivors of human trafficking.

As we move forward here, of course, time is of the essence. We had this bill before the House, you know, weeks ago. We wanted to pass this weeks ago. We wanted to make sure that this happened as soon as possible. Of course, we've seen some delays on the other side of the House. We know that at one point they were trying to send it to committee to delay it and, actually, probably end up killing it there. Then at the other end, now they're working on trying to speed it up. So it seems like they need to pick a track here. Of course, we would like to see this happen as soon as possible so that we can move forward with this bill, get it passed, and start protecting the people that it affects.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think it's just worth while responding to that. I just want to make it clear. No one was trying to slow anything down. We had phone calls in to stakeholders. We were merely asking for 48 hours to finish that up. If the member does think it's that important and he does believe that we ought to do this as expeditiously as possible, we have brought an amendment that will bring this into force five months sooner than the government would have indicated. He need only vote in favour of it if he thinks that that is the way to go.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

I'll just take a minute to apologize to the Member for Central Peace-Notley. I didn't see you; the chair was right in line with me. So I apologize for that.

On amendment A1.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:36 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

For the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Hoffman	Sabir
Eggen	Issik	Schow
Ganley	Jones	Sigurdson, L.
Getson	Loewen	Toor
Glasgo	Long	van Dijken
Goehring	Lovely	Williams
Goodridge	McIver	Yao
Gotfried	Reid	

Totals:	For – 23	Against – 0
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[Motion on amendment A1 carried unanimously]

The Acting Chair: We'll move on to the main bill, Bill 8. Any members wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

11:40

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I will be brief. I'm delighted to see that the government has supported our amendment. I think this may actually be a first in this Legislature, maybe a second. Anyway, I'm delighted to see that this occurred. I think it's an improvement.

I will rise only to provide final comments on this bill, which is to say that we have had the opportunity now to hear back from stakeholders. Again, that was what we were waiting on just to ensure that those on the ground were informed and happy, and they have indicated general support. The message I have received from all of them, though, is: it's a good start. So it's definitely a good thing. Everyone is in favour. I think we're all agreed. That's certainly our position in our caucus, that everyone is in favour. The challenge is that it does need supports with it.

One of the things that is meant to come with this bill or was in the government announcement but isn't explicitly referenced in the bill is a committee to deal with outstanding issues. That committee has not met yet. No one seems to know when it's meeting. So it would be helpful to us, I think, to hear from the government what the intention is with that committee, who will be on it and when it will begin meeting and when it's meant to report back and whether that report will be made public. That sounds like a lot of questions, but as you all in this place are aware, there are folks listening from the communications department, and they will write out those questions so that the government is able to answer them. I have asked them many times before, so I'm sure they're sick of hearing me say it. Yeah, knowing those details about the committee, about who's on it, when it will be convened, when it will report back, and whether that report will be made public – those are pretty critical details.

I think one of the other big things that are asked from stakeholders in this area is for a secure shelter specifically dealing with this. I think no one in this Chamber will be surprised to hear that individuals coming out of human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, are very, very traumatized, and individuals who are very, very traumatized often struggle with things that maybe some of us might find otherwise easy. One of the big asks is to have a shelter specifically designated for this so that people can get in right away so that the right supports can be in place because, again, if you've been the victim of human trafficking, particularly sex

trafficking, like, you're very traumatized. Not necessarily, but you may be very traumatized. Every survivor's journey will obviously be different, but individuals may require a lot of supports, and they may require a lot of specialized supports. That is definitely one of the big asks that's coming forward.

Another one is for legal advice. This is a super complicated area, and as someone who dealt, obviously, with individuals seeking advice from me, often temporary foreign workers – I was a labour and employment lawyer – seeking advice about, basically, abuses they had suffered at the hands of their employers, those things run the gamut, right? They were told that they were going to be paid a certain amount, and then they get paid a lower amount. They were told that they were going to work a certain number of hours, and instead they're expected to work 14 hours a day every day. Things having to do with unsafe work, being sent to a different location, not being paid at all: they're sort of all over the spectrum, right? All of those things are bad things. Not all of those things are human trafficking. Some of them may rise to that level, depending on whether the person's passport is removed and they're not permitted to go home, that sort of thing.

This can be a bit of a complicated area for people to determine whether or not they have a case, whether or not they're in a position to pursue that, so legal advice is very, very important. Obviously, these individuals, for the most part, are not going to be in a position to pay market costs for that legal advice, so the hope is to provide sort of specialized individuals working in this area because the intersection between sort of criminal law and immigration law and employment law is a pretty complex area. It's a pretty niche area, so it probably does need to be sort of specialized legal advice that's available to these individuals to seek, ideally on potentially nonstandard bases. They won't always be able to come in. They may sometimes have very limited access to a phone or to outside communications, so that needs to be as available as possible. That's another big thing.

The final thing, I would say, is additional supports to go to the groups supporting these individuals. I'm not totally sure where those supports are going to come from. Some of the groups, at least – the victims of crime fund certainly would support individuals who have been victims of any crime, and that's available through direct financial benefits and also through agencies that support victims. Unfortunately, as we are well aware, the victims of crime fund is going to be amended to allow the government to use that money, which, in my view, was always intended for victims, for other things. The concern there is that there will be less funding available both for the victims themselves and for the groups that support them.

Ensuring that, even if it's not coming from the victims of crime fund, there are additional funds coming forward from some other area in order to make sure that the groups that support victims of human trafficking and survivors of human trafficking have the resources in place to be able to respond because this isn't a question of – you know, a lot of times we hear about efficiencies, right? We want it to run in the most – I mean, everybody wants everything to run in the most efficient way possible. The problem with emergency services is that – I don't want to call it inefficiency. But there has to be a certain amount of, "Someone is available to help you right now; someone is not tied up with something else; they can't see you two weeks from now; they can help you right now" so that if a survivor, if a victim comes forward and says, "I believe I've been human trafficked," there is someone there to support that individual at that moment. We need to make the necessary resources available in order to do that.

With that, I will close by saying that this is a good step forward. I applaud the government for this. Certainly, everything I have

heard from all of the stakeholders working in this area is that they are very happy to see this move forward. Those are just a few of the additional requests that they had indicated that they have. With that, I will say thank you very much, and I will resume my place, and I will urge all members to vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Chair: Thanks, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to the main bill, Bill 8?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 8 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Any opposed? Carried on all points. Thank you very much.

Bill 13

Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2)

The Acting Chair: We will now move on to amendment A2, moved by Ms Ganley on behalf of Mr. Ceci, that Bill 13, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), be amended by striking out section 8. Any members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to speak to this amendment A2. What this amendment is essentially doing is that, if passed, it will limit the powers of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to modify the orders issued under a local state of emergency at his discretion while keeping the overall state of local emergency active. This amendment basically returns this piece of legislation back to the old language.

Our critic for Municipal Affairs has consulted on that. He has talked to municipalities. We already indicated that there are a few things in this piece of legislation that may be needed and requested by the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. We also have consulted with both the cities, and I can say that this is not what cities have asked for, in particular this power that the minister wants to give to himself where he can order, restrict, prohibit, or terminate the exercise by a local authority of any power given to the minister under section 19(1) and by a person authorized by a local authority to exercise.

I think that it's a broad, blanket discretion, and I will outline two or three things to argue that it's not needed. First thing: the city of Calgary didn't ask for it. Cities didn't ask for it. I think that the minister is giving himself a power which he didn't consult about, doesn't need. If there is a case, an emergency where the minister needs some kind of powers, in Bill 10 they have already given themselves a power where they can rewrite any piece of legislation, any bill, any regulation to deal with that emergency.

11:50

If I talk particularly about the Calgary context, Calgary has been hit hard by this pandemic. Where numbers of COVID-19 cases are relatively flat in Edmonton, in Calgary and south zone these numbers have been skyrocketing because of the outbreaks at Cargill, JBS, and other work sites. Calgary senior care centres have been hit hard. There have been the most deaths in the Calgary region due to those outbreaks at senior care centres. I think that the way this government has handled those situations – as a Calgarian I wouldn't be comfortable giving this government and this minister

the power to override something that my local city government is doing.

In particular, in Calgary's case CEMA is the agency, the Calgary Emergency Management Agency, that is in charge of dealing with these local emergencies. It's led by Chief Tom Sampson, and they've been around for a while. They have partnerships with more than 60 city departments and organizations, nonprofit organizations, and community partners. So there's a wealth of expertise there within that organization. They have dealt previously with severe weather events. They have dealt with security threats. They have dealt with the 2013 floods. They have dealt with, participated in the response to the Slave Lake fire in 2011. In 2009 they dealt with the H1N1 pandemic as well, just to name a few recent things that CEMA has been involved in and has dealt with. Those partnerships and these past experiences bring with them a wealth of institutional knowledge and expertise in dealing with emergency situations.

Insofar as this pandemic goes, Calgary brought forward a state of emergency prior to . . .

The Acting Chair: Sorry, hon. member. I hate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 3. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 8. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Mr. McIver: I move that we – do we still need to, Mr. Speaker, move to report progress? Okay. Then . . .

The Acting Speaker: Sorry. My apologies.

An Hon. Member: It's already moved.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. Okay. That's okay. Then I move that we adjourn the Assembly till 1:30 this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]

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