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The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

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Day 43

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, July 13, 2020

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

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

Bill 22 Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020

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

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Chair: Chair.

Mr. Nielsen: Sorry; Mr. Chair. Pretty close there. I missed by about three, five, six feet there.

I appreciate you recognizing me this evening to continue debate here on Bill 22, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020, an omnibus piece of legislation that's making multiple changes across multiple ministries. The Red Tape Reduction associate minister himself had a very big problem with regard to omnibus legislation that he perceived back in the 29th Legislature.

You know, we have seen multiple – multiple – omnibus pieces of legislation that have come into this House here since the UCP government started. Of course, members on the front benches and members of the caucus that served in the 29th Legislature also had significant problems when it came to omnibus pieces of legislation, yet here we are debating one of many that have come before us. Again, I can't help, Mr. Chair, but wonder, was there really a problem, then, back then? Did they not believe what it was that they were commenting on with regard to that, and do they still hold those views? Apparently not because, like I said, we've seen multiple omnibus pieces of legislation that have come before us here.

That said, though, here we have again, like I said, a piece of legislation making multiple changes. There are changes within the corporations act. We're seeing changes with regard to environmental, energy efficiency, safety code amendments, just a few of the highlights that we've seen with this piece of legislation to start off with. You know, Mr. Chair, when, I guess, you need to show Albertans why you're spending \$13 million of their hard-earned tax dollars, then you probably have to bring at least something forward.

Some of the things that we are seeing here are housekeeping, you know, Mr. Chair. I certainly don't begrudge the government for making those changes. I think they could have been made within a statutes amendment act. The one, of course, that we've just recently seen tabled, that could have been used right there to make some of these housekeeping changes. Did we really need to spend \$13 million on an associate minister and a ministry when it's clearly been established that all of the other ministries are quite capable of being able to direct their own red tape reduction strategies, implement those within their ministries, and Bob's your uncle, as

they say? Like I said, I guess if you have to demonstrate that you're doing something, you have to put something into the legislation at the very least.

I guess, you know, I would have been appreciative of the minister giving the opposition a technical briefing on Bill 22, which, unfortunately, did not happen. It took me asking questions in question period around some very specific points within the changes of the corporations act, when we initially looked at that. We saw things like changes taking out language with regard to insider trading. My gosh. The alarm bells that went off initially were substantial. As it turns out, they're quite benign changes. But it would have been nice to be able to ask some of those questions. Why are you taking this language out? Why are you making these changes? It was simply around, like you said, cleaning up some language here, but we could have avoided some potential situations here where it would have been easier to work with the government on this.

You know, then we have some other changes that are not so exciting, Mr. Chair. Limiting the instances under which administrative penalties can be imposed around the safety codes: I mean, we want to have, shall we say, bad actors when they are not following things properly to be held accountable. I think that by limiting some of these instances, we might be limiting our ability to impose those types of sanctions against them, so I don't know if that's necessarily a good red tape reduction. Hopefully, during the course of debate here within Committee of the Whole, maybe we'll get a chance to hear a little bit more around this and why these proposed changes are being made. Again, perhaps maybe a technical briefing could have cleaned some of that up to begin with.

We're also seeing changes around agreements on things like mining and mineral recovery, alternative royalty agreements, storage and sequestration of substances and subsurface reservoirs, and approval of oil sands schemes. That last one, Mr. Chair, worries me a little bit, especially around moving up a timeline so significantly that it could potentially impact any consultations that we might engage in with regard to the First Nations peoples. They, certainly, need to have fulsome, productive consultations. You know, we've seen projects before in the past held up because of a failure to properly consult with indigenous peoples, and I'm worried that this will create those circumstances again, and then we're going to find ourselves caught in that loop where we can't seem to get these projects moving in timely fashion.

I always remember, again, you know, having had the honour of serving in the 29th Legislature, hearing members of the government bench, members of the government caucus that served also in the 29th constantly talking about how bad it was to place any kind of new responsibilities or new powers or new abilities with the ministers themselves, yet here we are. Through Bill 22 along with many, many other pieces of legislation we're seeing exactly that. We're seeing more powers being given to the minister to make decisions without really having, I guess, a proper process put forth that would back that up, without question. So, again, was it a case of these members actually believing that, or did something happen between the 29th Legislature and the 30th Legislature now and this moment of epiphany, where: oh, well, maybe actually giving power to the minister is not that bad. I don't know. I'd love to hear some of the ministers maybe get up and explain that a little bit, who served, of course, in the 29th Legislature.

We've seen the energy efficiency is being repealed. You know, Mr. Chair, we have seen some significant push-back against Alberta with regard to the province's plans to deal with climate change. As much as there may be a few members in here that don't think that that's real, that don't think that is a problem, there are investors that are saying otherwise. So if you are sitting here trying to promote

good, solid investment within our province, yet here they are telling you, "Well, I'm not going to invest because of the lack of a plan here," at what point do you have to take that step back and start saying: "Okay. Maybe we're on the wrong track. Maybe we need to rethink this."?

7:40

We've certainly seen one or two signs with regard to maybe a little bit of a backtrack with regard to what the government is doing, and all of a sudden, you know, maybe things like investing in the tech sector aren't such a bad thing after all. I always hold hope that we will see this more and more often: okay; maybe we're not on the right track. How many more investors do we have to have tell us: well, we're not going to be coming here because you're not really addressing that? How many more credit downgrades are we going to see before maybe we need to address those kinds of things?

Simply, I guess, bulldozing forward, Mr. Chair, and saying, "Well, as long as we give a corporate tax break, everything will be fine," we're not seeing that it's fine. You know, before the pandemic we saw 50,000 job losses on this government's watch. We hear a lot about: well, we're going to create 55,000 jobs. That's great. You'll finally, hopefully, make up that 50,000 you lost, and then you're only 5,000 ahead. We still need more on top of that. Again, we are seeing some changes in tune here with regard to where some investments might be, but I think we can do a whole lot better.

Vital statistics doesn't need to prepare an annual report. Hopefully, any information that we're getting from Stats Canada will be complete with regard to what's going on in Alberta. If that is indeed the case on a regular basis, that's probably not necessarily a bad change, but we need to make sure that we're keeping an eye on that and that information that could be useful to us, you know, isn't being left out. Or, at the very least, are there going to be more efforts needed in order to get this kind of information for Alberta to be able to make sound decisions, which, in a way, kind of sounds like a little bit of red tape creation?

We've certainly seen a lot of red tape creation, Mr. Chair. I always worry that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction may be placing a lot of pressure on the other ministries because of some of, you know, the red tape that they're bringing in. They've got to quickly get rid of some others because we've got to keep on track for that one-third, that one-in, one-out goal that the associate minister has set. Of course, as soon as you start rushing things, that's when you start making decisions that maybe aren't necessarily in the best interests of hard-working Albertans. We've certainly seen a few decisions around, for instance, Bill 32 and the labour changes, all under the guise of red tape reduction. You are putting hard-working Albertans at a very, very large disadvantage.

Some changes. The Recreation Development Act is also repealed. The Minister of Environment and Parks is no longer responsible for encouraging and promoting the development of recreational facilities for the betterment of Albertans. We've seen how excited Albertans have been around the loss of their parks. You know, I certainly, I guess, would somewhat applaud the minister around allowing people to enjoy a beverage in the park system, assuming that there is a park there for them to be able to do that in. It kind of seems like, on one hand, we're doing one thing, and then we're working against ourselves over here, on the other hand.

We're seeing some changes within the surface rights with the board's ability to hear cases with claims up to \$50,000. I don't think that's necessarily a bad change. I guess the question is: is \$50,000 enough? We've certainly seen over the course of time that things

have gotten more expensive, things are valued more. Are we capturing, I guess, potential claims in cases that maybe at one point in time could have fit within the system, or are we just simply kind of putting a little bit of a value to capture a little bit here because they'll just come in under the \$50,000 but the rest will bounce over? You know, maybe that's a missed opportunity. Perhaps we could hear some information around that. What kind of consultation has been done around: is that going to be sufficient? And if it isn't, then maybe we can do an amendment on that and bump that up a little bit to be able to capture a little bit more. Hopefully, as they say, at the end of the day, we'll free up our court systems a little bit for bigger matters. Things will be a little less expensive and onerous for Albertans to be able to make those claims.

Mr. Chair, I do look forward to more debate here now in Committee of the Whole on Bill 22. My hope is that we'll probably be bringing some amendments forward, but just before we do that, of course, I always do want to give the minister a chance to maybe address some of these questions, talk a little bit more about the specifics. What's the intent in terms of what they're trying to accomplish on some of these things? Then we can certainly look at trying to propose some other amendments around this bill.

I have to admit, Mr. Chair, that with some of the changes that I am seeing here currently, I have some significant concerns, and I don't know if I'm necessarily going to be in a position to be able to support this later on. Again, we'll see, as the debate proceeds, what kind of amendments we might be able to discuss here. Hopefully, maybe the government will be open-minded enough to accept some of those. I'm not going to be holding out a whole lot of hope. So far I haven't seen a whole lot of movement around that.

It's funny because I do remember how much we were accused of not listening to the opposition and, you know, not taking their suggestions to heart, yet here we are in the exact same situation. If you're going to complain about something, you should be prepared to do better than that. I'm not quite seeing that at this time, but I do look forward to more debate.

With that, I will take my seat and will listen intently. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to address some of my concerns with regard to Bill 22, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020. I am concerned about the bill, first of all, in its actual format and intent, so it leaves me with some concerns about where individual pieces of the bill are going. It is a bit mysterious to me why a bill would need to be put together that brings various and sundry small bits and pieces from a variety of acts, almost a hundred per cent of which could simply have been done by having the ministers within each of those ministries actually deal with it without a bill at all, really, by just simply changing some regulations and moving things forward.

You know, when I was a minister of the Crown, it was always my responsibility to look at the processes and procedures that we engaged in and to make determinations about whether or not those processes and procedures were, in fact, necessary and useful and helpful in terms of directing the business of government. I'm a bit mystified that with this government the decision was made to not have the ministers take responsibility for the administration of their own acts and instead to pull that together and kind of give a faux job to an associate minister to do pieces of work that could readily have been done within each of the ministries, and I'll speak to that a little bit here.

7:50

The reason why I bring that up is because what really concerns me a lot about the nature of this whole red tape reduction implementation process is sort of the lack of philosophical integrity in the process here and where the government is going and what they're trying to do. I know that they speak to the fact that they would like to see a reduction in red tape in a variety of areas, but then they put an act together that, in fact, is largely not about red tape at all. It's merely about administrative clarity and so on.

If it was about red tape reduction, I might be interested to see the work that was done to identify where this big bogeyman that they keep referring to about the red tape actually exists. Apparently, devoting a full associate minister and the resources of the government of Alberta to the process has resulted in them being unable to find significant amounts of red tape. I think that undermines their basic philosophical argument that government is bound up in red tape and that that has been somehow hampering the people of Alberta. I guess it's interesting to see the government through this bill admit that their talking points about red tape really are unsubstantiated. Here we are now looking at the sections of this bill and trying to pretend on the government's side that there's a problem that's being rectified when, in fact, there is no problem identified at all. So I guess that is a concern for me.

It's also a concern, of course, that they complain and make statements about the need for a bill like Bill 22, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, while at the same time introducing other bills like 30 and 32, that are actually increasing what they would call red tape for people whom they don't see as their constituents, people who are employees of various companies. Now it is much more difficult for them to make processes to arrange for joint negotiation and establishing labour bodies that would help protect the rights of workers and funding those bodies and so on. They've actually increased red tape in one bill in the House right now while they pretend to decrease red tape with the other bill, which, as we can see as we go through the bill, does not really address red tape at all. It seems like a very expensive exercise in pretending, that the government is engaged in here, and I'm concerned about that.

Let's take a look at some of the particulars within this bill and some of the things that, apparently, the government felt it was necessary to write a whole bill about. If we look at what's happening, we see, for example, that under the Business Corporations Act, which could easily have been dealt with by the Minister of Service Alberta – he's obviously quite competent. He's had a number of bills in the House, quite able to put some things together, but somehow this authority was taken away from him and given to a different minister instead.

Let's take a look at what it is that's happening in the Business Corporations Act section of this omnibus bill and just see some of the things that are changed. For example, the requirement that one-quarter of the directors of the corporation must be Canadian has been repealed. Now, how could that possibly help Albertans? You don't even need to be an Albertan now in order to be part of this process. The directors of the companies don't need to be Albertans at all. I don't understand how that helps Albertans. It certainly helps American corporations. It certainly helps corporations from across Canada, but it does not appear to be directed toward protecting the ability of Albertans to make decisions about Albertan questions and problems, does it?

Of course, the legal requirement for a minimum quorum requiring that at least one-quarter of the directors be present is also repealed. Not only are we in the situation where the majority of people don't have to be Canadian, but they don't even have to be

there when the decisions are made. What we are now in the situation of is: a single American corporate executive can now make decisions over corporate behaviour in the province of Alberta without oversight or supervision by the government of the province of Alberta. A very disconcerting set of philosophical ideas inherent in that. I really must question: who is it that the UCP views as their constituents? They certainly don't seem to have the people of Alberta front and centre. Rather, people who are foreign-funded agents from another country seem to be getting the power here, not Albertans.

It's also indicated in this bill that the requirement for the managing director to be a resident of Canada is now repealed. Again, all the power is shifting somewhere out of Alberta. We don't know who it is that they're trying to please, but it certainly isn't Albertans. I guess I would certainly love the minister to come and explain why it is that you don't think Albertans are capable or you don't think that they need to be at the table when significant, important decisions are being made about corporations and their influence in the province of Alberta. I'm not sure who it is in Tennessee or in Texas that you actually like more than Albertans, but I'd certainly like to know their name. Perhaps you could stand up and offer us a little advice on that. I think that that's, you know, something that this government really has to reconsider, whether or not they're going to move in this direction of allowing transnationals to have a level of power and authority in this province that should be in the hands of people here in the province of Alberta.

I've said my piece on that, so let me go on to one of the other acts here. There are so many in here that we could really, literally, spend weeks going through them all because there's no sort of inherent consistency or integrity to the bill. We just have to jump from one piece to the other.

In this case I'd like to spend a few moments asking the minister about what the thinking is here and why it is that we are moving in the direction of eliminating the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act and getting rid of Energy Efficiency Alberta. I think that there is some deep concern about this because we know that under the previous Energy Efficiency Alberta's lifetime we saw a massive amount of commercialization and building in the province of Alberta of Alberta-based companies that are future focused and Alberta grown. We saw, for example, that there was \$850 million in economic growth between 2017 and 2019 attributed to Energy Efficiency Alberta. So what is it that the UCP has against diversification and economic growth in this province?

I know that sometimes when they talk, they suggest that these kinds of things are better left to, you know, individual companies and not supported by government. I really feel it's important that we stop and challenge that idea a little bit here again because history would show us that there are very few grand ideas and movements in society moving forward that were not, in fact, significantly supported by government as they moved along.

8:00

The big ideas that we had, including the development of the oil sands, were dramatically supported by government. We know that under Lougheed, for example, they actually bought part of the corporations in order to establish them and to make sure that they could begin the process of extracting oil from the oil sands. We know that they used the resources of the universities, primarily the University of Alberta, in developing the strategies and technologies that were used in the oil sands. In fact, without government intervention Alberta would not have a significant oil industry in this province right now. It's thanks to the Conservative leader Lougheed. When we look around the world, we see that this is true

in many other cases, that it is actually, in fact, government intervention that has led to the successes of businesses.

Now, we're accused sometimes on our side of the House of not being in favour of business, but it isn't true. What we believe, however, is that value in society is a joint project, that businesses have an extremely important role in the commercialization of ideas and the functioning of buying and selling products and goods, but the notion of creating an industry really relies on government intervention. Energy Efficiency Alberta was one of those, was a place where the ability for Alberta to move into energy areas that are going to be increasingly significant year over year into the future was being supported.

We know that during the time of Energy Efficiency Alberta, we saw massive adoption of wind projects. In fact, I was very happy to be part of a process where we had a public bidding process for wind projects to supply energy to the province of Alberta. In doing so, we accomplished two very major objectives. One of those major objectives was that we got an incredibly good price for the energy through our competitive bid process. Now, of course, it cost the government some money to develop that process and to implement that process, but what it means is that we now have major programs in the province of Alberta that are building major wind farms that are going to deliver some of the cheapest-cost electricity to Albertans. That's incredible. Built here in this province and delivering goods to people in this province because the government had a vision that included the concept of government and businesses working together for the betterment of Alberta. I think it's really important that we understand that that's what happened.

We also have seen the same thing happen in terms of solar. We saw a massive increase in solar, a 500 per cent increase in the building of solar panels in this province over a period of just over a year. That was because we made a decision that government does have a role. They don't need to own things, they don't need to direct things, but they certainly help to create the vision that moves society along and moves society ahead, just as they have done in so many other places. Government creates value by creating a situation in which businesses find it most productive to contribute to the benefits of the province of Alberta.

In this case we were able to create massive changes in renewable energy in this province in a period of less than three years that are ongoing and will continue to provide cheap, clean energy to the province of Alberta. We've seen that now that we've started that process, more businesses are coming in and are following up by building, sometimes on their own, exactly as what happened with the oil sands, exactly the same way, where government actually established the situation and the circumstances under which the new vision could be enacted. Then businesses jumped onboard, working well with the circumstances created by government and resulting in great positive outcomes for the citizens of Alberta.

I'm very concerned that we have lost an agency that did exactly what we need to do in this province and that is to think about the energy we are going to need into the future and the energy our kids are going to need and make a visionary decision that that energy can be done cheaply, it can be done in Alberta, and it can result in a cleaner environment.

We know, for example, that for every dollar that was invested by our government and businesses, there was a \$3.20 return through our energy efficiency programs. We also know that it cut 5.7 million tonnes of greenhouse gases between 2017 and 2019. That's what happens when government understands that they have a role in joint value creation with industry, those two things together, just as they have in many other places.

We certainly would never have gotten to the moon if it wasn't for massive government intervention, we certainly would not have an

Internet if it wasn't for massive government intervention, and now Tesla is producing some of the best cars in the world after receiving \$6 billion of massive intervention in the States: all examples of where government actually did the research work and set up the circumstances that allowed businesses to then do their part, which they are very good at. It's the type of relationship that we need to have in this province if we are going to be a part of the future and not part of the past, not trying to relive some, you know, glory days of 40 years ago.

I certainly would love the minister to stand up and explain a little bit about why such a successful enterprise with such positive outcomes, not only for the present but for the future of our children, has been undermined. I think that, you know, these kinds of things are very problematic when what they reflect is that there's just a dogmatic decision on the part of government to abandon principles of success and go to philosophical intransigence. I think that this is a good opportunity for the government to stop and to examine their intransigence and to look at the idea that government can be visionary, should be visionary, in fact, should anticipate where we need to be as a province in years to come, and should work with industry to jointly create value.

Let's move on a little bit to some of the other areas that I'm concerned about. For example, under the Mines and Minerals Act the thing that is most concerning for me here is that we are actually reducing oversight for decisions here by removing the decision-making from cabinet and putting it into the hands of the minister. Now, of course, I think that the minister should be making decisions within their ministry. I think that's the appropriate thing to do, but the logical thing to do is that when the minister has made a decision, they should be able to go to their cabinet peers.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Other members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen to debate.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to talk a little bit about red tape reduction and why it's so important. I want to first thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his kind words about my performance as Service Alberta minister. It's not often that we get kind words across the aisle.

You know, I need to address a few of the things that he did talk about, specifically about our government policy and on the topic of red tape reduction. I know he used the words "an expensive exercise." Mr. Chair, I can't think of a more expensive exercise that we've seen here in Alberta than the NDP's four years in government with their carbon tax and their antibusiness and anti-investment approaches. Thank goodness Albertans saw fit to fire them last year.

Let's talk a bit about the election. I mean, we campaigned on a platform that was very clear that we would be very focused on reducing unnecessary red tape, reducing unnecessary costs and burdens on Albertans and Alberta businesses. Mr. Chair, this is something that everyday Albertans embraced in the last election campaign. In fact, over a million of them voted for this government, to send us here to focus on this important exercise. They can see what we're trying to do with this even if the NDP can't.

8:10

You know, as a minister I have the privilege and opportunity to work with my department on a regular basis to look for ways to reduce unnecessary red tape in my portfolio. I have this conversation very regularly with my staff and my department officials. I'm always telling them: "Look, this is not just about reducing statute count. This is not just about the number of

regulations, the number of statutes, the number of policies. At the end of the day this is about the impact that these rules and regulations have on Albertans and Alberta businesses.”

When we can find an opportunity to modernize how we do things, to improve our processes, to get things done in a more effective way while saving money, either for the government, which indirectly then means for the taxpayer, or whether it be for Albertans and Alberta businesses directly by reducing the costs that they have to pay in order to comply with our rules and regulations, that’s a good thing, Mr. Chair. Again, Albertans embraced this overwhelmingly in the last election, sending us here to focus on this as a key priority.

You know, I’ll give you a practical example. I’m lucky to be the MLA for the great riding of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, just east of Edmonton here. One of the things that Strathcona county is well known for is that we are one of the members of what’s called the Alberta Industrial Heartland, which is the home to most of the refineries and petrochemical facilities in Alberta and is a significant economic driver for this province. Many of the families that live in my riding work in these facilities. Many of the small businesses in Sherwood Park and Strathcona county provide service to those facilities. As a new MLA I’ve had a lot of fun getting to know these many businesses: the ones who have existing operations in the heartland, the ones who are looking to expand their operations in the heartland, the ones who are looking to come and be new investors in building new facilities in the heartland.

Mr. Chair, there’s a lot of opportunity there. I mean, we have some of the lowest-cost feedstock in the world. We have so many things going for us, but one of the things that I’m told time and time again is: the biggest obstacle to us choosing to invest in Alberta, to investing in the Alberta Industrial Heartland is that it takes too long to get things done, and there’s way too much uncertainty in the regulatory process. This is because we have got – over the last many, many years we’ve had this escalation of regulatory creep. Layer upon layer upon layer has been added on. Every one of those layers was well meaning to try and maybe address a problem, but none of it was thinking comprehensively across the whole scope of a project to say: does it make sense in aggregate?

What you found is that with all the different levels of government and all of the different levels of regulations being piled on one another, we ended up with Alberta becoming not a competitive jurisdiction, an uncompetitive jurisdiction. That’s what this is all about. We’re trying to fix that. We’re trying to send a signal to investors all around the world, to companies that want to expand their businesses in areas that are a complementary fit for Alberta, that would be a natural fit to call Alberta their home. We’re trying to say: “If you come here, you will have the best environment possible to build your facility, to create jobs, to deploy your capital. Please do it here in Alberta.” The most important thing that we can do is to eliminate unnecessary red tape.

We still need to have the right amount of checks and balances in our system, Mr. Chair – don’t get me wrong; that’s important – but there is so much opportunity. When it takes us years longer in Alberta than other jurisdictions to get a similar project finished, we have a problem. That is why I am such a big believer in our government’s decision to have an associate minister whose sole focus is to lead our government’s initiatives on reducing unnecessary red tape all across the province.

You know, Mr. Chair, to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford’s point that each of the ministers from each of their portfolios could just do this on their own: well, of course we put thought and effort into that. But these efforts, the ones I just gave an example of with the Industrial Heartland, and finding ways to ensure that we send signals to investors that this will be the best jurisdiction and the most competitive jurisdiction in which to invest requires cross-

departmental efforts. I can’t think of a better reason why we would want an Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction to lead the charge on bringing those departments together and rallying the troops to say, “What’s it going to take to get us to where we need to be?” so that the industry out there, the investors, and the businesses that want to grow will see, trust, and believe that Alberta will be the best place for them to grow and to invest and to create jobs.

I believe in that vision, Mr. Chair. Albertans believe in that vision, and that’s why over a million Albertans sent us here last year to get to work on creating jobs, attracting investment, growing the economy, and a big part of that is our platform commitment to reduce unnecessary red tape. I believe this is important. I believe in the need to have an Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Of course, I worked very hard on supporting this bill, to submit a number of opportunities through legislation and regulations that Service Alberta is responsible for, and I’m proud of what our government is doing on this file.

Thank you for the opportunity to share those thoughts.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, this is an interesting segue for the Minister of Service Alberta. Part of that is because when I was in government, I was also part of the heartland MLA group because in northeast Edmonton we also have lots of different business associations and land that have been looking at using diversification for the heartland.

While I was in government, to speak to the red tape reduction component and the hon. minister’s comments around, “Well, part of the reason we’re doing this is because we want to encourage investment into the heartland,” I totally support that. Many of my constituents work in the heartland. It’s an extremely resource-rich area. It has lots of feedstock that can be used for diversification, and the employers out there employ not only from Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood Park, northeast Edmonton but also Redwater, Gibbons, all those kinds of places. Now, in saying that, the interesting thing I found that the minister said about the red tape reduction and trying to encourage investment is that we actually saw a \$1.1 billion fund that was created for the petrochemical development in the heartland, and what came out of that was Inter Pipeline and the Inter Pipeline project that started in 2016, which was under us as the NDP government and, of course, the joint project between Pembina Pipeline and, of course, the subsidiaries of Kuwait Petrochemical, all building in 2016, which has created a lot of diversification in the heartland around value-added production.

Of course, what we know with Inter Pipeline and the diversification programs that did invest in the heartland when we were in government is that the other components and, of course, the projects that are slated to continue to be in the heartland around using that value-added production and creating secondary production such as plastics, plastic pellets, autobody parts, a variety of different things, yogurt containers – lots of different conversations are still going on in regard to the value-added production that exists in the heartland. Now, that happened in 2016. Then again we saw a significant increase in interest in the heartland in wanting to create more diversification to the point where at one point we had 23 applicants for projects specifically to work in the heartland and to do value-added production, which was about \$60.2 billion in potential investment in the heartland alone. That, again, was in 2016, 2017. That had nothing to do with red tape. There were lots of businesses that were coming up that really wanted to use our cheap feedstock.

Actually, the minister of natural gas and I have actually discussed this, about how great it is that we have such a cheap feedstock here that it's encouraging for industry to come up and look at using that feedstock to look at diversification. It isn't about red tape. Because if it was about red tape, we wouldn't have had 23 applications in 2016 from companies that wanted to come to Alberta to do petrochemical diversification.

8:20

Although I appreciate what the minister is saying around this is why we're doing it, the facts are that there were 15,500 jobs created in the Industrial Heartland specific to the petrochemical diversification projects and another thousand jobs that were projected, once the project was completed, as stable ongoing jobs. Of course, what we knew was that the total private-sector investment was going to be about \$20.6 billion and, once the facility is operational, which it is now, \$284 million each year in revenue to Alberta.

Again, I just wanted to comment that I appreciate what the hon. minister is saying, and I am a huge supporter of the heartland and the diversification projects in the petrochemical industry. I believe that we should be diversifying our economy that way and that any more potential investment that can come to ensure that the petrochemical programs continue, can diversify, and then continue to use those off products to build other manufacturing products is absolutely something that we should be doing. But to say that Bill 22 is the reason why industry is going to come to Alberta, that isn't the case. The case is that we have a cheap feedstock. The feedstock is what they're looking for, so that is why they came and that is why they will continue to be here and that is why we see even more petrochemical programs and industries asking to invest in Alberta.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief. I want to just, you know, thank the member for her support for the Industrial Heartland. It is important. It is a huge driver for our province and, certainly, for the region that we both represent to the north and east of Edmonton.

I just have to point out a couple of things. The member is right. There were over 20 applicants in 2016 and 2017 for the program that her government put forward, who were looking to consider investing in building projects in the heartland, two of which got support, Inter Pipeline and Pembina. I'm not denying any of that.

I think it's important to point out that those 23 applications were not applying to say: can I come to Alberta? They were applying to say: we'll let the Alberta government give me money to come here and set up and invest and build my facility. Now, my question to the Member for Edmonton-Manning is: how many of those 23 came here? It was, to my knowledge, just the two that received that funding. I have to respectfully disagree; it wasn't just about the low feedstock and the other advantages that Alberta offers. I mean, those are all important things. I agree with that. I hear it all the time. I have talked to all of these companies since becoming an MLA, and I'm working to build relationships with them because they are important parts of our province and our economy and our future, and they have a lot that we can learn from as legislators.

What I have heard is that we need to make Alberta more competitive, and if we did that, if we could reduce unnecessary red tape, if we could provide more certainty on what it will take to get a project approved here and we can shorten the timelines that it will take to get answers on whether you are a yes or a no and if you're a no, why not, and what would it take to get to yes, Mr. Chair, that is

what would move the needle on making sure that not just the two who applied and received government funding would come here but that all 23 who wanted to come here would come here and invest and build their facilities. They didn't need all of the government supports; they just needed a shorter time frame and more certainty so that we would be as competitive or more competitive than any other place in North America where they could choose to put their capital to work. That is what I'm hearing when I talk to leaders in the business community who either currently operate in or are looking to invest in building facilities in the Industrial Heartland.

It's a shame the NDP never heard the same thing. I can't imagine why not. But I can tell you that that is what I hear every single time that I talk to these folks, and I believe them. That is why I'm so committed to supporting our government's overall initiatives on red tape reduction, be it Bill 22 or any other red tape reduction initiative to come in the future.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other hon. members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair. I rise to speak to this bill, which is a huge omnibus bill. It makes changes to 14 pieces of legislation across six different ministries. I remember that not long ago on this side of the House the UCP would complain about pieces of legislation that made changes to labour relations and employment standards, fairly connected areas, and they used to bring motions to split those two pieces of legislation so they could debate. They would go on and on about how we were curtailing the debate, how we were taking their opportunity to contribute to the debate away from them. Here we are a year later, and they are putting together 14 pretty much unrelated pieces of legislation, making sweeping and substantial changes in the name of red tape.

I will confess that at least after seeing and hearing this rhetoric of red tape, I've completely lost what red tape really means. When we were in government, like every minister, we were tasked to look at the program policies, engage with stakeholders, engage with constituents, engage with those you're serving and make changes to those programs and policies that are efficient, that reflect their needs, that respond to their needs. I can come up with many examples across my ministry, across my government, and across other ministries that my colleagues were dealing with that did that for four years. For instance, when we started, each application under the PC government used to be 21 or 23 pages, something like that, and it was pretty much a three-step process. We were able to make that application shorter. We were able to make that a one-step process. That, in my mind, was red tape reduction because we were making the process efficient.

If you're putting Albertans' land up for sale, Albertans were able to participate in those sales, and now anyone from across Canada can participate. I think that's more than red tape reduction. It's a fairly fundamental change to how government is dealing with Albertans' land.

If we are changing how we will deal and make decisions about resource development, that's a fairly significant and fundamental change. How government will deal with Albertans' own resources, that's not red tape. Government is deliberately hiding these significant changes behind their rhetoric that they are somehow making things efficient, and nothing can be further from the truth when we look at these changes.

There may be some minor changes here and there in this piece of legislation, but they could have been dealt with in even a miscellaneous statutes act, and we would have no issues with some

of those changes. But here we are seeing massive changes across 14 substantial pieces of legislation in the name of red tape.

8:30

Instead of the ministers, who deal with their ministry on a daily basis – it's my belief that they're the ones better situated to know their ministry. They're the ones who deal with Albertans who interact with the programs and policies that the ministries offer. Like, they are privy to all of the details. They have a staff complement. They have the public service and all of those things. The government thought that in order to cut red tape, they needed another associate minister on top of all of the ministers, who will help them determine what's red tape in their ministry. I think that by adding that minister, the government created that red tape, that now the ministers will go through another associate minister to make their processes, programs, and policies efficient. That's red tape there, and if the government is interested in saving, they can always make that choice and save \$10 million to \$12 million. I think that's the budget for this minister.

We knew from day one that the associate minister wouldn't know more than the minister in charge of the department. In a June 12 press conference, when the minister was introducing this piece of legislation, the minister was asked on a number of occasions about the changes contained in this legislation, and sure enough, he wasn't able to answer the majority of those questions. Every time a question was posed to the minister, the answer was: you have to talk to the relevant minister; you have to talk to the Minister of Environment and Parks; you have to talk to the Minister of Energy. On a number of occasions the minister didn't know at all what's contained in his bill.

Now while we are debating it, I think that what would be really helpful is that if instead of repeating talking points and throwing partisan attacks, the government front bench will get up and help us understand how these changes are red tape reduction, how you decided about these changes, who was consulted, and all of those things. The answer every time they get up: they start swinging their mandate across the aisle, that they got voted in on a platform that included some reference that they will bring in a red tape reduction bill. I think that on this side of the House they didn't get that mandate. The constituents we represent have differing views than that side. The changes that are contained in this piece of legislation do impact deeply Albertans in our ridings and Albertans across this province.

Since they have put together 14 different pieces of legislation, I think I will be able to talk to just a few of them. Let me start from my critic area, the Oil Sands Conservation Act. It's an important piece of legislation that establishes a regulatory regime for the development of oil sands resources related facilities for the benefit of all Albertans. These are the resources that are co-owned by Albertans, Albertans living in our ridings. They also own these resources, and they have every right to be consulted because these resources belong to those Albertans. Here this bill amends this important piece of legislation so that there are no more requirements for cabinet to make decisions on resource development. This bill effectively removes cabinet's opportunity to have oversight on these important decisions. These are decisions that impact Albertans in all of our ridings. These are decisions that are about Albertans' natural resources, resources that they own, resources that have long been the reason for their prosperity. Management of these resources is a critical question of critical importance because jobs depend on the management of natural resources. The future of our children depends on how we manage these resources. The future of our environment depends on how we manage our resources.

Certainly, provincial government has obligations beyond this legislation as well, which are constitutional obligations as well, constitutional obligations to consult indigenous communities, to accommodate their concerns, their fiduciary duties, their constitutional obligations to do so. Now cabinet is removing itself from those decisions. It doesn't help in any way, shape, or manner to expedite the process because even if they delegate that decision-making authority to AER, there's a broad legal consensus that they will still be obliged to fulfill their constitutional obligations towards indigenous communities.

One very well-respected and regarded professor of natural resource law at the University of Calgary, Nigel Banks – Nigel Banks was also my teacher. Just in the name of full disclosure, that's how I know Nigel Banks as well. He's very well regarded when it comes to resource law, water law, environment law, indigenous law, all of the things that government couldn't care less about. He made a blog post, and he talked about this change.

8:40

I can quote from what Professor Banks has to say. "This does not and cannot mean that these obligations have just disappeared." With respect to the duties of the Crown, Professor Banks stated: "These duties of the Crown are just that, constitutional duties. They are not red tape; there is no red tape to be cut." That's the analysis that's coming from one of the most regarded professors in this area. If the minister of red tape has anything to say to it, I would be really interested in listening to how the minister sees the views expressed by Professor Banks. He's clearly saying that this is not red tape and that there is no red tape to be cut in this one. It's a constitutional obligation, and they cannot displace that obligation by just delegating that decision-making authority to AER. Unless there is an explanation that minister can offer in response to Professor Banks' comment, I think we are left to speculate that either it's a misstatement made by the minister and they didn't fully canvass it through, or they are knowingly just putting something in here that they ought to know is their constitutional obligation and they cannot wash their hands from that, just delegating this authority to AER.

Again, back to what I was saying, they named this piece of legislation as red tape reduction, and they included one of the most significant and fundamental changes about resource development in Alberta in the guise of red tape reduction. I think I would also be interested in learning from the minister who they consulted on this change. I do know that they may have good relations with big corporations and CEOs, but at the end of the day, that resource belongs to Albertans. That belongs to every Albertan. Was there any consultation put to the public at large to tell them that their resources will be managed by a delegated authority?

Clearly, this change has some significant implications for Crown obligations with respect to indigenous communities. That's the area, indigenous law, that I used to practise before becoming an MLA. I may know a little bit about it. Again, I would be very much interested in learning what were the consultations with indigenous communities. When were they held? Were all 48 First Nations engaged in it? It has a bearing on their constitutionally protected rights.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen to join debate.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and also join the debate on Bill 22, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020. As my colleagues have

already said, you know, we have before us an omnibus bill, 175 pages. It's like a book. It's a huge piece of legislation. Also, as my hon. colleagues have also shared, it does challenge some of the tenets of democracy that often we bring up in this House, so that when 14 pieces of legislation that relate – well, okay, this is in this one bill, but when 14 ministries are impacted by this legislation, it shows that the government is sort of mashing together a bunch of stuff that's not necessarily all coherently related.

You know, it is, of course, the task of the opposition to speak up regarding these concerns. I know absolutely that this government while in opposition would have been outraged by this. But they're happy, as government, to forget all that time when they actually called to account a bit of faith in democracy and a willingness to actually look at legislation that's not ridiculously put together like this. It's really troubling for sure.

I think one of the most fundamental troubling aspects of this legislation is on page 122. If people are reading along, they can turn to page 122. There we can see the Emissions Management and Climate Resilience Act, and it talks about the dissolution of the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act. Of course, this is a legislation program that we brought in when we were government that was extremely successful. Here it says that by September 30 that body will be dissolved. I'd like to focus my comments on this because I see this as particularly egregious, especially in 2020.

When this government was elected a little over a year ago, they immediately cut 70 per cent of investments into this program, so, of course, they were attacking it very early on. They didn't see the value in this program. Obviously, by their dissolution of it, it shows that they don't see the value of it at all, which kind of defies logic to me. I just don't really understand that at all because we know that Energy Efficiency Alberta was wildly successful, made a huge difference for Albertans all across this province, small businesses. It was phenomenally prescribed. It made a huge difference, yet this UCP government is deciding to completely annihilate it. We know that it helped municipalities, homeowners, and businesses save money and energy while creating jobs and improving Alberta's international reputation as a responsible steward of the environment. I don't know. These are all very good things. I can't see anything that's wrong with them. That's why I'm questioning the government and particularly here the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction on why this would be done when it had such a resounding success. We know that Energy Efficiency Alberta created \$850 million in economic growth between 2017 and 2019. I would think that would be something that this UCP government would laud and would actually want to support. That is a significant creation of wealth.

8:50

Now, we know that every dollar that was invested returned \$3.20, again, an economic argument. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle like to bring up that that's the most important thing about government. With those numbers – you know, invest \$1; get \$3.20 back – that's a pretty good deal. Regardless, this government is dissolving Energy Efficiency Alberta.

We know that 5.7 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were cut during this program. That's not a trifle. That is a tremendous amount of pollution that was in Alberta. This program worked to help Albertans live more greenly. You know, that's not bad; 5.7 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were avoided. That's a significant difference.

What will we lose when this program is completely dissolved by September 30, 2020? What will we lose? Well, we know that there was a highly successful small-business energy efficiency program. Solar initiatives, oil and gas emission reduction

programs: these will be lost. Individuals and small businesses received millions of dollars through energy savings and energy emission reductions. That will be something we lose. In three years \$692 million was saved by these individuals and small businesses, and as I said, 5.7 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were avoided. Yet this UCP government sees fit to dissolve this program, that has had this tremendous success, that was subscribed to by so many Albertans. So many small businesses were able to, you know, green their businesses, their homes. It made a huge difference for Albertans.

In fact, you know, research has been done about the popularity of this program. We know that every postal code area in this province has received funding from this program. Now, I don't know; that sounds pretty popular to me. That's extraordinary, so it just defies logic that this government is now dissolving this program. We know that there were 214,000 participants, and 210,000 of these were households. People, individual households, families: they thought that this was a great idea, and they certainly took advantage of it.

We know also that this program created hundreds of jobs when, you know, people received support to, I don't know, put some solar panels on their roof, retrofit things. I know that certainly in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing there was tremendous support for housing management bodies. A lot of the facilities are quite aged, so even just fundamental things like having a door that fits properly so that heat isn't lost or that roofs are reshingled or that proper windows are put in: we put millions of dollars into supporting that. You know what? That pays back in huge benefits to the housing management providers because then they're not spending so much on energy. It just makes so much sense all around because we know that we need to be good stewards of our environment. Now this government has seen fit to just wipe out Energy Efficiency Alberta, so people will not have those opportunities anymore.

As I was saying, hundreds of jobs were cut, you know, because of this. Since the program is not going to go on, there won't be that kind of surge in retrofitting or in ways that people are served by workers in those fields. Yet we're in a very difficult situation with COVID-19, so you would think that that was a priority of the government, creating jobs. And here is a program that has already demonstrated – demonstrated – that it does that and also demonstrated that so many people wanted it and benefited from it. Small businesses, families benefited tremendously, yet the government sees fit to dissolve this program, and therefore with that is the dissolution of many jobs that could potentially have been created or that continue.

I guess, you know, the question that's the most obvious in this legislation is: why would they do this? Like, why is the government doing this? I mean, I asked the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: why would this be seen as red tape? This is an important program that protects our environment, creates jobs, and gives people needed support to green their lives through the things I've already expressed. But another thing it also does is that it diversifies our economy, which we know in Alberta is something that is very important for us to do. Our oil and gas sector is very important, but we can't only rely on it, and we know that, seeing ourselves so vulnerable to the world price of oil.

You know, this government currently is really challenged with very low oil prices. If we put all of our eggs in one basket, like we have done for so many years, that's not effective. That's going to make us have these highs and lows, which we all are familiar with, having lived in the province for any length of time. We need to have those other industries. Certainly, this would be a great way to continue to diversify our economy, through green programs: those retrofits, solar programs, other programs. People want it. People

know that climate change is real and that we'd better get moving on that because certainly there are some limitations in how long we can just ignore this without it causing us huge issues in our province, in our country, and on the globe, of course.

Of course, this flies in the face of many countries on the planet and what they're doing. Internationally countries are doing completely the opposite of what this government is doing. They're moving towards more climate leadership plans, you know, programs that support businesses and individuals to make sure that their homes are energy efficient, that their businesses are energy efficient. New Zealand is now talking about their post-COVID recovery plan, and they're focused on connecting that with growing green jobs. This is something that they just spoke about recently.

We know that the European economic stimulus plan is investing \$137 billion to build energy retrofits, but here in Alberta we're terminating a program that did exactly that. We're going backwards. This is archaic. You know, it's time to actually deal with the issues at hand and not think that things could be magically okay and we are living 20 years ago. It's time for us to keep moving forward and to know that climate change is real and that these kinds of programs – like, Energy Efficient Alberta is a very valuable program that Albertans want, and the investment that we put in it was wildly successful. It made a huge difference.

We need to address this. Certainly, the NDP's climate leadership plan, when we were in government, improved our reputation on the world scale, and people now, I'm sure, are going to be questioning that again because of the dissolution of Energy Efficiency Alberta.

Another important point that I want to make – and this is something, actually, that we talked about during the afternoon. We had talked about I think it was Bill 33, about encouraging investment in our province. One of the things investors want to know is – more and more people want to put their money into jurisdictions that actually are protecting environment, and I know that Alberta has suffered some losses of investments coming out of our province because we are now going backwards in terms of, you know, climate leadership. Being an environmental leader is actually a way to increase investment. I think that's a very important point that the government needs to understand so that we are encouraging investment in our province.

9:00

What were the benefits? I guess, you know, they're still existing until September 30 although of course they've been scaled back dramatically. We know that 70 per cent of the funding was cut a year ago, and folks are not obviously initiating any new projects.

What are some of the benefits that we're going to lose because this UCP government is cutting this program, cutting the Energy Efficiency Alberta program? The significant climate benefits that I just spoke about, you know, the – what was it? – 5.7 avoidance in emissions. That's a significant loss, absolutely. Job creation: we're going to be losing hundreds and maybe even thousands. If you think about what this plan was meant to do over time and the success it had even in its first few years, we could be talking about thousands of jobs having been lost, and really we're missing a big chance at diversification. Then, of course, the competitive advantages that energy efficiency brings to Alberta: that stimulates investment, and we know that investors have left our province because they feel we aren't being respectful of the environment, we aren't being good stewards of the environment.

I just want to quote from an opinion editorial in the *Edmonton Journal*, and I'm happy to table this tomorrow when I have the

opportunity. It's from the director of the Pembina Institute in Alberta, Chris Severson-Baker, and he says:

To attract needed investment, Alberta must show the world that it can be an environmental leader. Sustained programming could deliver as many as 1,700 jobs in residential energy efficiency by 2030, and up to 5,900 new jobs in Alberta across oil and gas, construction, equipment installation and so on, and \$2.3 billion in GDP growth. It is difficult to imagine that we have the luxury to turn away from this opportunity instead of investing in its potential.

Yeah, it defies logic, Mr. Chair, that this program would be cut when it has given us such tremendous success. It was well subscribed and really made so many significant differences, that I articulated.

So, you know, despite the many pages, the 175 pages, of this omnibus bill, I mean, I think that piece where Energy Efficiency Alberta is dissolved is the egregious piece of this legislation, and I certainly strongly stand to reject that. That isn't what Albertans want. It certainly isn't what my constituents want. It isn't what the housing management bodies that I worked with while I was Minister of Seniors and Housing want. People want this kind of support. People want to live more green, clean lives.

The government really is foolish not to keep this program going. It made a huge difference for our province by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, avoiding them; creating jobs; creating a more positive environment internationally so people were interested in Alberta and could see that we were responsible stewards of our jurisdiction, our province; diversifying our economy, which is such a key part that is necessary here in Alberta so that we have jobs and we're not beholden to only one sector. On every logical front, you know, I don't understand this. If the minister responds to any of my concerns, I'd certainly appreciate that because I know that Albertans, constituents in my riding: this is one of their number one concerns here in Alberta. They care deeply that this province, our land are respected.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's pleasant to see you this evening. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the Chamber to debate this important piece of legislation. I was listening with great intent to the previous speaker's comments when it came to this red tape reduction bill. Let me start out by congratulating the hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction on another excellent piece of legislation before this Chamber, which I will certainly be supporting.

It comes as no surprise to me that that NDP member and the NDP in general seem to be indicating yet again that they won't support red tape reduction inside this province. That shouldn't surprise us. We do know that they're for red tape and excessive regulations on the people of Alberta, doing everything they can to be able to stop businesses from being able to succeed. That's their track record, of course, when they had the privilege of being the government in this province, Mr. Chair, and I would suggest to you that it's one of the reasons why they were fired in such a historical fashion just over a year ago by the people of Alberta.

I did listen in particular to the comments in and around EEA. The reality is that I noticed that the hon. member just glossed over lots of the facts that were associated with that, spent a particular amount of time trying to make the situation around the NDP's climate leadership plan, which, Mr. Chair, just so we're clear, is the NDP's carbon tax – that's what that is; that's code; they call it the climate leadership plan, which is code for the NDP's carbon tax – and did

not spend a lot of time talking about what the NDP's climate leadership plan and carbon tax actually did when it came to emissions.

The reality is that the hon. member's leader, the now Leader of the Official Opposition, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, former Premier of Alberta, while being the Premier, at a year-end interview – Mr. Chair, as you may know, a year-end interview is kind of the most important interview for the Premier of the year. They spend a considerable amount of time preparing for those interviews. That is their moment to be able to talk about the things that their government had accomplished in the last 12 months. A tremendous amount of preparation goes into those interviews, ministries being able to provide feedback to the Premier so the Premier is able to provide information about what is taking place within departments.

When you talk about climate change, in particular the NDP's climate leadership plan, that is the signature policy of the NDP government. I disagree with it, but they did not. They were very proud of it. You saw the hon. member referring to that here. They were very proud of that piece of policy. When the then Premier, now the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, was speaking about that, she was asked a very simple question: how much emissions were reduced as a result of the NDP's climate leadership plan, as a result of the NDP's carbon tax, which, of course, included Energy Efficiency Alberta as a signature component of that, as a signature organization that would implement the tax and the programs associated with that tax. She was asked how much was reduced.

Now, I don't know about you, Mr. Chair, or our colleagues in the Chamber today. That seems like a reasonable question for your signature policy piece. If you're talking about taxing Albertans on everything, because they're taxing fuel – and everything, of course, as you know, in our economy comes either through truck or train or other forms of transportation. This was raising the cost not only of the heat for Albertans on their homes or the fuel inside their vehicles as they transported their families around the province; this was raising the price even on your carrots inside the grocery store because it costs fuel to get the carrots to the grocery store.

You would think that the Premier, in her big moment at the end of the year, would be able to say: "Yes. We reduced this much emissions, and here are the results that took place as a result of the work that we've done on our climate leadership plan." Her answer was: "I don't know. We're not sure. We had no way of tracking it. We don't know what we accomplished with our signature policy." The reality is that the NDP don't know how many emissions they reduced as a result of their policy. I suspect that maybe they did actually know that it didn't reduce much, Mr. Chair, because the reality is that it wasn't focusing on where the most emissions are inside our province.

9:10

Instead, they took the money that was associated with their carbon tax – again, Mr. Chair, we can disagree whether it should have been a carbon tax, but once it was here within the province and the government was using it, you would think it would actually go towards dealing with the issue that they told Albertans they were trying to deal with. What did they invest it in? They hired Ontario companies. First off, shame on them for that. They hired Ontario companies at a time when they had lost 180,000 jobs – "they" being the NDP – inside the province of Alberta. They went and they hired an Ontario company to come to Alberta to install light bulbs inside people's homes and to install shower heads inside people's homes.

I remember that at the time, I did an interview with Rick Bell of the Calgary *Sun* at the time. He asked me what I thought about that, and I made it clear that my family and my constituents install our

own light bulbs. We didn't need the government to tax us and then go to our houses and install the light bulbs.

Mr. Jones: No. You're tall.

Mr. Jason Nixon: To be fair, that's correct, hon. member. I'm pretty tall, so maybe, you know, I don't need as much help as the average guy, somebody coming in, to be able to put in the light bulbs.

We always made do. Mr. Chair, you know my wife; she's not tall. I've never seen her ask me to want to get an Ontario company to come and install light bulbs at our house. But to each their own.

The other thing they did, though, was that they installed shower heads. This is the one that really offended rural Alberta. An Ontario company had to come all the way to Alberta to install shower heads using, Mr. Chair, our tax dollars, that they took from us after not telling the truth about bringing in the carbon tax. They hid that from Albertans. Shame on them for that. They took our money. They put it into the orange slush fund, as we used to call it back then, and then they hired their friends in Ontario to come and install shower heads. Now, they went out to rural Alberta, and they installed shower heads. The shower heads never worked. They didn't work. Do you know why? The water pressure is different when you're dealing with a place that has well water over top of the city. They went around, and they tried to install these shower heads. Then everybody had to call and ask them to remove their shower heads because the water would not flow when it came to rural Alberta. It was a failure.

There are a lot of great examples of that failure. Those are just two of those failures. Again, the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona confirmed the failure of one of the many failures of her government. Probably the biggest failure is that she couldn't even articulate any emission reductions as a result of all that pain on the people of Alberta. That is the organization and the process that that hon. member is trying to defend.

Instead, this government is committed and keeping its promise to the people of Alberta to remove Energy Efficiency Alberta and the last portions of the NDP's carbon tax, which did nothing for emissions but instead taxed Albertans and provided them with inadequate, cheap products from the province of Ontario, Mr. Chair. We rejected that. We promised Albertans that we would get rid of it. Albertans voted in overwhelming, historical numbers – the highest vote percentages in the history of a turnout inside the province, the highest vote numbers in the history of the province – to reject that NDP's approach.

That member still has not heard Albertans. For her to stand up here, over a year since that famous rejection of the NDP's policies by the people of Alberta, the only one-term government in the history of the province – that's pretty shocking – largely because of their economic policies and in particular because of their policies as to climate change and the carbon tax, for that member to stand up in this Chamber and ask other members to stand and continue to vote with her on that failed policy when in her entire 20 minutes she couldn't even point to one emission reduction number that was actually a fact – she couldn't even refer to it. She just said, and I quote: it causes great economic stimulation. She couldn't point to how many jobs have been created as a result of that and then glossed over the fact that it's not free money.

I know that the NDP has trouble understanding that, for whatever reason. They think that money that leaves the government that goes to pay for these types of programs is free money. But it's not free money, Mr. Chair; it's our constituents – my constituents and your constituents and that hon. member's constituents – who pay for that

money. It's their money, and they don't need the government to take it and to pay Ontario for light bulbs and shower heads.

The reality is this. You watch it here inside this Chamber. The NDP are finally realizing that every one of their ridiculous policies that they brought forward inside this place is unravelling and will be removed from law inside this province because that's what the people of Alberta said. If the NDP ever want to come back into mainstream Alberta, they're going to have to accept that the idea of taxing Albertans to pay for things like shower heads, with no results when it comes to emissions, is completely unacceptable and ridiculous.

Now, the other thing that the hon. member said was that we still needed Energy Efficiency Alberta, which is in this bill, because we needed to tackle climate change as a province. Well, I will say to you, Mr. Chair, and through you to all members of this Chamber: does what I just described sound like a plan to be able to tackle climate change? I don't think so. But she also glossed over the fact that we do already have a plan inside this province to deal with climate change. This government made a signature policy within its platform. It's a signature policy of the Premier, who campaigned on this issue, to go back to what Alberta has always done when it comes to emission reductions, which is to focus on working with our largest industry, to focus on technology, and to innovate our way out of these problems.

Alberta was the first jurisdiction in the country and one of the first jurisdictions in North America to tackle emissions. Sixty-some per cent of all of our emissions come from 127 factories or plants within our province. Putting light bulbs and shower heads that don't work on my farm: is that going to actually deal with our emissions reduction problem? No. Governments of the past recognized that and recognized the need to focus on technology to be able to make sure that we can actually tackle this problem, not only tackle the problem to defend our largest industry and make sure that it can continue to succeed but to be able to also create another market that we have as a province where we can sell that technology and be able to use that innovation to be able to help the world tackle things like climate change.

In their wisdom the governments that came before the NDP put in Emissions Reduction Alberta, and that member does not talk about the fact that Emissions Reduction Alberta still exists. Only the NDP would argue in this Chamber that we need two emissions reduction organizations. That's red tape. That's the very definition of red tape. That member, though, doesn't recognize that and also doesn't recognize the significant numbers that are coming from Emissions Reduction Alberta, who is not focused on taxing Albertans and instead is focusing on creating technology and working with the industry to solve it. Yes, I can give you the number, Mr. Chair. They anticipate over 30,000 megatonnes in reduction in GHG emissions through their program. No light bulbs being installed, no fuel carbon tax on the consumers of this province: that's true emissions reduction. Those are actual results, and that's what you will get when you are not ashamed of the largest industry in this province or in their ability to be able to innovate or to be able to create technology and help us through this situation.

Hopefully, the members will learn some things from that. Hopefully, they'll take some time to actually understand what emissions efficiency Alberta did inside our province and maybe, Mr. Chair, just take some time to reflect on the fact that their program was a failure. That's okay. They had lots of failed programs. This one was one of the higher ones, but they can reflect on that and go: "You know what, government? You're correct. We brought in a duplicate agency that focused on light bulbs and shower heads that had no results that we can defend at all. We made a mistake. Thank you very much for solving the mistake." Nothing

makes me more happy than being able to help the NDP fix their mistakes.

They don't give any acknowledgement to the minister, the associate minister of red tape, on how much work he's had to do to fix their mistakes. They should thank him because he's fixing their mistakes. You know what's going to happen eventually? Albertans are probably going to forget about some of these mistakes. Time is going to go on. They should be very grateful for that opportunity from the associate minister, who has worked so hard ultimately with this bill to be able to fix NDP mistakes. If anything else, if there's any doubt at all why you should vote for that, at the end of the day the bill should've been called Fix the NDP's Mistakes, and that's why you should vote for that bill. We're going to fix the NDP mistakes. I promise you we're going to continue to fix them despite the fact that the NDP continues to want to mislead Albertans about their ridiculous carbon tax.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any hon. members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again and continue to contribute to the debate on Bill 22, the red tape reduction act. You know, I have to say, Mr. Chair, that we're talking about fixing mistakes. Maybe we should fix the \$4.7 billion handout that some corporations took the money and walked out of the province with. Maybe that, you know, needs to be fixed, maybe the 50,000 jobs that were lost despite the \$4.7 billion corporate handout that's now been accelerated. I know some of my colleagues have talked about that a little bit. You know what they say. What is it? The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

9:20

You know, I've always said, "Credit where credit is due," and I do want to give some credit to the Minister of Service Alberta for hopping up and talking about his area and the Industrial Heartland. I do represent a northeast Edmonton riding that's close by, not quite there. I'm a big supporter of the North Edmonton Business Association, and my constituents work in that area, so I do appreciate the advocacy that you do and for going into that area.

I do of course remember that with the petrochemicals diversification program. That did bring forward a couple of petrochemical plants with that. Thankfully, the associate minister of red tape hasn't cut those. I do, of course, remember some companies like Husky that were very, very seriously looking at partial upgrading, but – oops – it looks like that might have gotten cut in the red tape reduction.

But, of course, I do have to key in – and we heard that from the Government House Leader around the election, always throwing that out there and everything like that, so I have to wonder. In the whole discussion during that election of, you know, jobs, the economy, pipeline, and, oh, let's make sure we get rid of the old language for insider trading because that will help create jobs, and that will diversify the economy, and that'll get a pipeline built, I'm wondering. We've heard over and over again the talking points about how the election was the biggest consultation in the history of Alberta. Why did that not pop up as a big priority to create jobs, getting rid of this language of insider trading?

I guess that when we start looking at some of these things I've seen some of my colleagues bring up around the public lands, you know, we've heard the Government House Leader saying over and over again, "Parks aren't getting sold; public lands aren't getting sold" right up until Bill 22 came out. Some of my colleagues have

already mentioned it, where it's going to get sold to, well, anybody in Canada. How is that going to create jobs for Albertans? They're saying: "Don't sell my parks. I want a job. I don't want insider trading language dealt with with red tape."

How about we deal with the red tape interprovincially, Mr. Chair, to allow, say, for instance, our small brewers to access other provinces' markets like other provinces have access to our market? I've found out that it's easier to try to sell down to the U.S. than it is to our own provinces here in Canada. How about reducing that red tape? That will create some jobs. Those brewers will get bigger. They're going to need employees with more product going out the door, but it's not going to be because of a \$4.7 billion corporate handout. For some reason, when I talk to all of my small and even my medium-sized businesses, they keep telling me: well, I'm not big enough for that to really be of benefit. So if we're going to talk about reducing red tape, I don't know if getting rid of that language should have been our first priority around, say, for instance, insider training.

But I do want to get back to public lands. I think we have an opportunity here, Mr. Chair. If creating jobs and diversifying the economy is the priority that the government says it is, I don't think selling our public lands is going to further that. Arguably – and certainly I know my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has talked about this a little bit at times around consultation. I just don't remember it coming up for me: oh, we've got to off-load as many public lands and parks as we can.

I think if, perhaps, maybe the visual – I'm trying to give the government a little bit of the benefit of the doubt here. People seem to think that, you know, maybe if they stop treating these public lands as just theirs to be able to sell, focus on these jobs because we're already down 50,000 prepandemic – that \$4.7 billion didn't do it. We were already I think it was the second-lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country by .2 per cent, and they haven't been lining up.

If we take a look at these public lands and how this bill amends the act to allow every Canadian resident to participate in those sales whereas they used to have to be just, you know, an Alberta resident or the company had to be here, it's funny because I do remember just shortly ago the Government House Leader talking about how the previous government had to go get a company out in Ontario and all that other stuff, yet here we are duplicating that, going outside of the province so other companies could come in and just take this land.

Mr. Chair, I have an amendment with the original on top. I will send those up to you, and I will await further instructions from you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. If you could please read it into the record.

For the benefit of members, if you'd like a copy delivered, you can put up your hand, but there will be, of course, copies available for everybody at the tables as well.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, please continue.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 22, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020, be amended in section 14 by striking out subsection (3).

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, but for the benefit of all members in the House, this will be referred to as amendment A2.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you. I appreciate that. You know, Mr. Chair, I've seen the government bring forth legislation that I think very clearly places a priority on friends and insiders and how those can be helped, so I can only conclude, just based on the things I hear, the things I'm seeing brought forward to this House, that the whole

point of the sale of these public lands is to help those friends and insiders. I don't think that the government has done consultations on this, and they can claim, like I said, the election results all they want. I'm hearing this from my colleagues, too, and I don't remember this coming up on the doorsteps in Edmonton-Decore: wow, we just need to sell those public lands; this red tape reduction will allow us to prosper.

9:30

It's funny. You know, I just remembered another thing, that the Government House Leader had – well, quite honestly, berating the Leader of the Official Opposition about not having an answer around emissions. Well, the Associate Minister of Red Tape didn't have any answers around Bill 22 when asked. He kept deferring to other ministers. So I'm kind of wondering if maybe the Government House Leader had a discussion with the associate minister about that like he's expecting of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I see a very distinct lack of trust by people about the government in terms of public lands, so perhaps if we remove this, maybe this will help start getting a little bit more confidence in the government. Right now they've got this auspicious title of the most secretive government in the country. Perhaps if the government sees some value in removing this, it will start to help to build that. But right now they see their lands being sold to someone else.

So it's my hope that the government will look at this very seriously and will be willing to start to move the dial on that conversation by accepting this amendment A2, to amend section 14 by striking out subsection (3).

Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members looking to join debate on amendment A2? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that opportunity and to support my colleague who has brought forward an amendment to page 169 of Bill 22. You know, I agree with the sentiment that we should be focusing on Albertans for any benefit conferred to them through the possibility of buying public lands or former parks. I think one of the challenges I see for those who are outside of this province taking the opportunity to purchase, if that is the case, is that they would be several steps removed from this province and all of its people, all of its glory, I guess, in terms of what we have here, in terms of natural environment and the history behind that environment in this province. My colleague has a reasoned amendment that he's brought forward with regard to striking out subsection (3) on page 169, as I said, and page 170. So thank you for bringing that forward.

I think just generally that there is much concern about the possibility of the sale of our public parks and other lands that are in public domain at this point in time and cared for by the government of Alberta. The fact that the government would step back from its role in managing these public lands is a concern many people have expressed across this province. I know that there have been seminars on the web involving CPAWS and the Council of Canadians, where they've tried to inform Albertans about the activities that were in the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020, that relate to public lands.

As my colleague has also said, you know, one of the criticisms of some previous legislation that we undertook was that the proponents were removed from this province. I think one way to counteract that same criticism for this legislation is to ensure that

we undertake to benefit those who are companies or individuals in this province so that they have a more direct role and perhaps a more direct personal commitment to ensuring that the public lands and other lands under management by the government of Alberta that are set out to be transferred by lease or sale are responsibly and always managed. The direct tie that Albertans would feel back to those Albertan companies or individual Albertans would be strengthened. The ability to kind of give direct feedback on how those lands are being managed would be strengthened as a result of ensuring that there are quote, unquote, locals, who would benefit from the transfer by lease or sale.

You know, just generally we heard earlier that there are 300,000 Albertans who are unemployed right now. That's 1 in 4 Calgarians. Every man, woman, and child in Calgary: 1 in 4 are out of work at this point in time. Probably for Edmonton proper it would be 1 in 3 of every man, woman, and child. So it's not like there isn't a need for Albertans to be the beneficiaries of opportunities if they've got savings and other abilities to leverage their worth, to be successful in this regard with regard to managing the sale if lands are sold or leased. We have a lot of people who need to get back to work. Jobs, economy, pipelines was certainly the calling card or cry of the last election in terms of the motto for the UCP. Jobs are certainly something that would benefit as a result of dedicating, as my colleague has done, to strike section 14(3) so that Albertans, companies, and individuals would be the beneficiaries of these actions.

In Bill 22 with regard to what benefit that would bring Albertans, Alberta's companies would be directly tied to a GDP bump. We certainly need a lot of that, as the Premier himself stated earlier today. I think I got the numbers right. He talked about a \$360 billion GDP prior to COVID and the drop in world oil prices in this province and that that's gone down to \$300 billion. That's a significant drop, obviously. It's about 15 per cent. He indicated or I thought I heard him say that it was 8 per cent, but it's higher if it's \$360 billion to \$300 billion. I think I have those numbers right from listening to him on the TV. Our GDP needs to be improved significantly. Companies that are Albertan and individuals that are in this province would directly contribute to that increase if they were successful and being able to see improvements to their own companies or net worth.

9:40

I'll give my colleague credit. There are many things to point out in this 175-page bill, and he's got, I understand, probably several amendments that are coming forward, but this one is right towards the back with regard to public lands. I think he did that strategically because the things that I've heard and seen through the media are concerns about our public lands and not wanting to see the government move in that direction. I've certainly heard from government and UCP members over the time we've been in the House of late, when this bill was first brought forward, you know, defending this action and talking about the expense that makes it impossible to continue to keep some of these public lands in the government inventory. Talking about firewood being helicoptered in is one thing I remember being said over and over and over again. But I do want to say that I think Albertans are rightly concerned about actions that would decrease the inventory of public land, and I'm certainly with my colleague who wants to see that stay in the hands of Albertans or companies in this province.

Just to continue on with additional – my colleague mentioned that the interprovincial trade barriers that are put in place across this country would be a great thing to focus on, whether it be in Bill 22 or other places, because one of the huge things that's negatively affecting us in this province is the inability to get our products to

market. I know that doesn't have a lot to do with public lands, but I just want to hook it back to say that we seem to be not standing up enough in this province. I know that the government dropped our trade challenges with regard to breweries, but this seems to be opening, in terms of public lands, the ability for others outside – again, to kind of give back to, give away to them things that we should be keeping here.

Those are some of my concerns, and I certainly will support the amendment on the floor and hope that members of this House do similar with regard to listening to Albertans who are not satisfied that we're looking at the disinvestment, disbursement of public lands in the way that is identified in Bill 22. Public lands are very sacred, and the fact that we can all go into them and recreate and know that there's going to be garbage pickup in them, there's going to be good management, there's going to be fire protection – not to say that owners or people who'd lease that land wouldn't be concerned about that, too, but I'm happier that the government of Alberta continues in that role through all of our public lands, so I'll be supporting our motion, and I hope that other members of the House will consider doing the same.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to join debate on A2? It looks like the individual who caught my eye is the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chair, to be able to rise and talk about this amendment a little bit and in particular in regard to the comments in and around public lands.

First, I'd like to start out specifically with section 14(3). I do think that the hon. member should do a little bit more work as he's preparing amendments. He is striking out clearly the section that defines Canadian corporations and the need for only Canadians to be able to purchase public land.

A corporation . . . [that has] share capital, a corporation in which not less than 75% of the equity shares are registered in the name of and beneficially owned by

(A) one or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents as defined in the Immigration Act (Canada)

That's what he's proposing to remove as well as

(B) one or more corporations with share capital, if in each case not less than 75% of its equity shares are registered in the name of and beneficially owned by Canadian citizens or permanent residents as defined in the Immigration Act (Canada)

He's attempting to change the bill to allow Americans and other non-Canadians to purchase Crown land, so I would encourage all of my colleagues to not support that amendment.

However, even if the amendment was doing what the hon. member was indicating that it was doing in his comments, I would also encourage all members in the Chamber to not support this amendment, not the amendment that the hon. member has brought forward but the amendment within Bill 22. The Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act will bring our legislation in line with both Saskatchewan and B.C. when it comes to grazing leases and the purchase of Crown land. It makes our trade fair across those barriers and is a signature piece of the Premier's plan to knock down trade barriers in the country of Canada to provide opportunities to our citizens and elsewhere in other provinces, Mr. Chair.

Now, the former Finance minister – the reason I say former Finance minister, Mr. Chair, is because I know that his constituency changed in the last election, and I'm trying to find it. It used to be Calgary-Fort, but I think he's Calgary-Buffalo now. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, the worst Finance minister in the

history of the province, had lots of comments to say around public lands and why this would fit. He referred to CPAWS. Let's start there.

CPAWS, of course, is one of the province's propaganda arms of the then NDP government and now the NDP opposition, which has spent their time focusing on stopping Albertans from having access to the Crown land. One of the most famous things they did just before the last election – fortunately, we were able to stop that – is that they attempted inside my community, inside Clearwater county and inside the community of Rocky Mountain House, to shut an area of land, Mr. Chair, that went from the national parks all the way to the county of Ponoka, just outside of Rimbey, to try to then tell those communities – Brazeau county, Clearwater county, Ponoka county, Lacombe county, the community of Rocky Mountain House, the community of Drayton Valley, the community of Eckville, the community of Rimbey – that they could not utilize the public land just outside their backyard. They attempted to sterilize that landscape – that is their main goal; it always has been – from any access for people to be able to recreate and, quite frankly, ultimately, being able to do any activity that created economic growth in our communities.

Now, Mr. Chair, you're probably not very familiar with the area that I'm from. Ponoka county is a long way from the headwaters. It's a long way from the eastern slopes. It's a long way from forest reserves. It's a long way from any of those areas that the hon. member is referring to, but their friends in CPAWS, working together with the then NDP government, tried to shut down that entire area. Now, it was a shame. Fortunately, we were able to stop that.

Now, that doesn't mean that CPAWS and their close allies Y2Y, who are all proven foreign-funded organizations dedicated to sterilizing our landscapes and stopping Albertans from having access to their land – Mr. Chair, I can tell you that my constituents have not forgotten an NDP government coming into Rocky Mountain House, a community that's been around since 1799 in this province, and telling them that they can no longer utilize their backyard. Worse than that, then they told them that they weren't keeping care of the North Saskatchewan River, the lifeblood of their community for a couple of hundred years. They weren't keeping care of it, so somebody from Edmonton was going to tell them how to keep care of the North Saskatchewan River. Meanwhile, when the river leaves Rocky Mountain House, you can drink the water straight from the river. I challenge whether you can do that where that hon. member comes from. The people of Clearwater county and the North Saskatchewan River area have been doing a great job for centuries of taking care of that area.

The worst part about all of it – a lot of my colleagues weren't here for this, Mr. Chair – was that the four indigenous communities that called that area home – the Big Horn, the O'Chiese, the Sunchild, and the Smallboys – weren't even consulted. They weren't even consulted, and when they challenged that issue, the former minister said that the RCMP wanted her to shut down the town halls, which turned out not to be true. At the end of the day the people certainly of west-central Alberta have not forgotten what the NDP tried to do to public land outside our community. We're proud that we were able to stand up against the NDP and were able to stop that ridiculous process.

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* also spent a considerable amount of time talking about parks and that this amendment would stop parks from being sold. Well, first of all, no parks are being sold in this province. Second of all, the area that he's referring to – parks are primarily found in the eastern slopes of the province. There is no private land in the eastern slopes of the province at all except for one spot, and it happens to be in my constituency, my favourite place on the planet. I intend and I hope that that's where my wife buries me or spreads my ashes when I'm

gone. I know lots of my relatives have had the privilege of being there. That is the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch.

9:50

Now, the Ya Ha Tinda was started over a century ago by the Brewster brothers. Some of you may be familiar with Brewster buses outside of Banff. It's the Brewster brothers who started that, of course. I see that my friend the hon. MLA for Banff-Kananaskis recognizes that name right away because they're everywhere, but really that goes all the way back a century ago to the Brewster brothers, who were the first guys into Banff and Jasper national parks. This was pre-Confederation, Mr. Chair. They needed a place to be able to raise their horses in the off season, and they settled in a place called Ya Ha Tinda, which means mountain prairie to the indigenous community in the area.

If you have not had the privilege, Mr. Chair, I strongly encourage you to go there. It's a world-class horseback-riding destination and a working horse ranch about two hours west of Sundre, right up against Banff national park. It is on Alberta land, but it is deeded land, now deeded to the national park service. It started out as deeded land to the Brewster brothers, who then, in turn, turned it over to the national park service some time ago. To this day every horse that is used in the national park service in the entire country of Canada is raised there and trained there before they are sent all across the country to the national park service, and every ranger has to come to the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch to learn how to use their horses to patrol the parks that they're responsible for.

Lastly, of course, the Ya Ha Tinda is the base for the rangers who patrol Banff and Jasper national parks, who spend weeks on horseback patrolling the backcountry. That's where they come to resupply and to contact their family before they head back out again on patrol. That's the only deeded land, and it's pre-Confederation. Meanwhile we've had the NDP for weeks claiming that land was going to be sold in the eastern slopes. You can't sell land in the eastern slopes, Mr. Chair. It's a shame that they would continue to mislead Albertans like that, but those Albertans, of course, who utilize that area know they're misleading them. The idea that you could sell that is, first of all, not in this bill and, second of all, categorically false.

The reality of what has taken place with our parks system – the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* glossed over the helicopter trips for firewood. The former minister who created luxury camps in the backcountry that cost millions of dollars and used helicopters to deliver wood and to remove sewage from those sites – that's one of the things we stopped. Further to that, our parks system across this province is spread out against a province that is larger than most European countries. We have large parks that some people would be familiar with: the Castle, Kananaskis, large landscapes where we have huge park infrastructure and lots of park employees.

Then, Mr. Chair, we have what are called provincial recreation areas, that are spread all across places like the eastern slopes, some of them multiple hours away from parks employees. In some of the cases parks employees – get this. The public lands side of Alberta Environment can't maintain it if it's called a park under the parks act. They can't even go inside the fence. They have to drive right by it. But a parks employee could be three hours away, and in some cases in this province we have parks employees driving six-hour round trips to provincial recreation areas just to collect money and put toilet paper inside the outhouses. Six-hour round trips. Meanwhile the public lands division is driving right by. They'd like to be able to help with that.

So all we have done is simply. . .

Mrs. Aheer: Isn't that red tape?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Exactly. That's red tape.

... committed to being able to allow Albertans to recreate inside those sites like they have for generations, but we've said that we will change the act in certain areas where they're far away from where parks employees are and allow public lands employees to take over the role.

Now, public lands employees maintain most of the public land in the province. The vast majority of our landscape is maintained by public lands employees, and I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that they're more than capable of going and collecting money from the box, enforcing the rules, making sure that there is toilet paper in the outhouses, and dealing with the situations that they deal with, which is not as easy as it sounds. Often dealing with bears or people that are intoxicated are problems that you will face inside those facilities. But now they're able to do it on the other side of the fence.

The NDP's reaction to that is that all of the parks are being sold. It's ridiculous. It's a ridiculous argument, Mr. Speaker, and it's a continuation of the NDP's policy of wasting Albertans' money. We're committed to making sure that that does not happen.

This is such a shocking approach that the NDP is taking. I watched the NDP environment critic, the MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar, a member who stood in this House and praised the death of the greatest female leader of the last century. I watched him hold a press conference that said that Dinosaur provincial park was shut. "It's shut." Dinosaur provincial park is full. It's full to capacity. It's one of the busiest parks in this province. It's a Crown jewel of this province. It is a historical site that is busy. That is a park that is verifiably full. But that's what the NDP does. There's a word for what they call that in my constituency, Mr. Chair. You know I can't say it. There's a song that goes with it. Part of the song is "pants on fire," but I can't say the other side. That's what's taking place.

Here is the reality. Not one provincial park – not one – has been shut in the province of Alberta. Not one except for some that are currently temporarily shut because of flooding elsewhere in the province, and the department will get them reopened. We've changed it so that they can be better managed for the people of Alberta to enjoy.

A lot of the people don't know this. Alberta Environment has one of the biggest offices in Rocky Mountain House, which makes sense; the gateway to the Rockies. My friend for Banff-Kananaskis thinks she represents the gateway to the Rockies, but I think David Thompson had it figured it out that Lake Abraham is the best place to go. I'm kind of partial to the Columbia Icefield on our side, but whatever. I digress.

You could sit in my MLA office across the street, Mr. Chair, and you could watch the trucks leave from that office. A white truck drives down highway 11, the David Thompson road, and it has a symbol on it that says Ag and Forestry, and they drive down the road. A few minutes later another truck drives down, a white truck that looks exactly the same, same equipment, that says Alberta fish and wildlife. A few minutes later another white truck drives down that says Alberta Environment and Parks. That one is the public lands guy. A few moments after that another one drives down that says Alberta conservation officer, which is the parks guy. How many trucks now driving down the same road?

Now, the parks guy, as he's driving by little campgrounds – my brother, the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, likes to camp at these. I personally prefer to just camp in the woods. He likes a more structured environment. I don't know if he's nervous out there with the bears or what the story is, but he says he likes them. And only the parks guy can go inside the gate and check if he paid his \$10. The public lands guy has to sit outside the gate. They have the same training, same capabilities, same truck, same colour, same department, same minister. It is ridiculous, Mr. Chair.

The Provincial Parks Act was written in a time when it was just primarily built to be able to manage campgrounds, and that's why our party committed in our platform to rewrite the parks act. We will pass legislation in the next 12 months in this Chamber that will modernize the parks act to bring it in line to be able to maintain the multiple-use landscapes that we now have as a government. We're long past the day when mom and dad came out in the station wagon and just parked at the sites. We now have active cattle ranches inside our parks. We have large landscapes, some of them the size of Great Britain, inside this very province. We have people that use them for multiple activities, yes, including camping.

We also have industry that uses our areas. We have a forestry industry that uses those areas successfully. We can manage these landscapes for multiple use, and that means that we need to change the act to make it efficient, and we need to help our teams work well together to be able to protect those landscapes. And, yes, that means that we're not going to have somebody drive six hours from Edmonton to go check a campsite that only saw 10 people this weekend. Instead, we're going to get the people that are 10 minutes away to do that.

Mr. Chair, you're going to continue to hear from the NDP fearmongering, but here is the reality. Most of the NDP have never been in the eastern slopes. It's why when they brought forward a plan outside of Rocky Mountain House and called it the Bighorn plan, everybody who lived in Clearwater county said, "What is the Bighorn plan?" Nobody had ever heard of this. They said, "This place that you call home, we're going to call it the Bighorn." We all said: "No. That's the west country. That's David Thompson country. That's our backyard." "No. It's the Bighorn."

Mr. Chair, they couldn't even drive out there to make the announcement. Instead, they took a picture of my constituency, the most beautiful constituency in the province, and they blew it up. They blew it up, and then they put it up as a backdrop at a venue in Edmonton, I believe the YMCA, because they couldn't even find where Rocky Mountain House was, evidently. They couldn't even announce that they were going to build a park. They didn't even drive to the community to say: "Hey, we're going to build a park in your backyard that you're not allowed to go into. Instead, we're going to take a picture." I'm not a hundred per cent sure, but when I looked at it, I actually don't think it was anywhere near Rocky Mountain House. Then they put it up, and the then Premier and the environment minister stood up there and said: "Guess what? We're going to build you a park."

10:00

I can tell you this, Mr. Chair. Albertans have not forgotten how badly the NDP handled the public lands file. We have not forgotten our commitment to Albertans to make sure that they will always have access to their backyards and that we will be partners with them when it comes to conservation, and that's what I want to close with. At the end of the day, the NDP don't understand how we've created all these beautiful landscapes that we call home.

In my community the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch – I've already said that it's one of my favourite places on Earth. I'm very biased towards it. I love it there. It was shut when I was a kid. I used to go hunting there with my dad. It was shut because people were abusing it, so the national park service shut it, and nobody could have access to it anymore. Along came the Friends of the Eastern Slopes, which is a nonprofit organization founded in the great town of Sundre, my hometown. They went together, and every year they had a banquet in Innisfail. I haven't missed one in years. They raised the money to be able to do it. They opened it back up, and that ranch is completely and utterly run by volunteers to this day. It is the best, by far, world-class destination in the world for horseback riding.

Completely run by volunteers, clean, beautiful, it will be preserved for generations to come.

They don't want us to partner with people like that. That's what they want to stop. They believe that only union workers and their friends can go out and be able to protect the west country. Well, I say: shame on that. I reject that because I have seen over and over people like the Friends of the Eastern Slopes do it.

You know the other one they want to stop? Sylvan Lake provincial park, all around the lake and inside Sylvan Lake, right in the town limits.

Mr. Sabir: Sell it.

Mr. Jason Nixon: You know what? He says: sell it. The former environment minister, who I've had many arguments with, made the right decision in 2018. She turned that park over to the town of Sylvan Lake to run that park inside the province. If you saw the news today, it's packed this weekend. That's the big news that's taken place there.

If that hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a problem with that, he should take it up with the former minister. But the former minister was right that we can partner with municipalities, that we can partner with nonprofits, and that we can partner with indigenous communities to provide recreation opportunities in this province, because, Mr. Chair, they do it better than the government. The Friends of the Eastern Slopes don't have five or six trucks leaving Rocky Mountain House to patrol the same road. That's your way. Our way is better.

But let me be clear: we are not selling provincial parks. We're proud of our recreation areas. Albertans will always have access to them, and they can count on this government to stop wasting their money flying in firewood and to get back to focus on working on conserving these precious areas and making sure that my kids will have an opportunity to be able to recreate in the generations to come.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister. You might actually be interested to know that I have quite an extensive base of knowledge of some of the communities that you referred to, including visiting extended family in Rocky Mountain House and lots of happy memories of doing that as a child.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I knew you were my kind of guy, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to this amendment. As I indicated earlier, in the name of red tape reduction this bill is making significant changes that deal with the ownership of land that Albertans collectively own. This bill is just designed to sell that land off to their friends and insiders. It's finding a way to do that.

The Public Lands Act, the changes that are proposed in this piece of legislation – the legislation was designed to manage public lands. Like, it sets out mechanisms by which rights in public lands may be transferred by lease or sale. The things that were contained in this piece of legislation were designed in a way that would protect the public interest and public ownership by Albertans in this land.

In no way, shape, or manner is it red tape. There is nothing to be cut. The only thing you are cutting is public ownership of these lands, and that's not red tape. That's not red tape. You are taking Albertans' resource, Albertans' land, away from them without even talking to them, without even consulting them.

It's deeply concerning because when the minister of red tape introduced this legislation, he was asked about these changes. He was asked about these changes, and, like many other questions, his answer was: you have to talk to the minister responsible. I wasn't able to understand from the minister's comments on this legislation: what did they consider when they brought forward these changes?

At the end of the day, these are public lands. These are owned by the public. They are not their personal lands, and they shouldn't be treating them as such. The public has a vested interest in how these lands are managed, and they have every right to be concerned about these changes, because I, at least, have never heard that there was any consultation whatsoever with the public on this change.

During the campaign and soon after that, when the Premier indicated that they were thinking about selling some land, indigenous communities and leaders were very clear that they opposed the government's plan to sell these lands. Since the minister didn't tell us when he introduced this legislation and deferred every question to the minister responsible, it would have been helpful if anyone from the front bench would have shared the details of the consultations with the public, details of the consultations with indigenous communities, because indigenous communities spoke out against the sale of public land.

At the same time, I don't know how much to expect from this government. The indigenous communities across this province for a while now have been asking that the Premier's speech writer be fired, and they have not done that yet, so I don't know what kind of relations they have with the indigenous communities, why they are not listening to them, and why they are not consulted on this important change that will affect their constitutional rights, that will affect their indigenous and treaty rights.

[Mrs. Allard in the chair]

They can message these changes the way they want, but they have made changes that are a huge cause for concern for Albertans across the province. I have heard from many Albertans with respect to the Environment and Parks minister's handling of Alberta's public parks.

10:10

Their own government sources – the government website, the government pages – indicate that there will be changes made to the parks system. Immediate changes include partial or full closure of 20 parks in 2020. These are the facts stated on many government sources, that there will be partial or full closure of 20 parks in 2020. That's on websites. That's in every media story. That's on websites of those who are advocating for public management of the parks, and I don't know if the minister thinks that every one of them is not telling the truth. There is news out there that there will be no services in many of them. That's also fundamentally a question of access because, prior to this government, Albertans used to have services there.

Then I think there is enough mention in the news, in, I guess, public discussions that they've been increasing the fees to access the parks, especially at a time when, because of the standstill economy, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Albertans are restricted in travel. They don't have many options, and one of the safer options would be that they enjoy their own public parks, that they used to enjoy previous to this government. But what this government has done: one, they are either partially or fully closing some of those sites, they are discontinuing the services that were available previously, and they are increasing the fees for access to those parks, making it literally inaccessible to Albertans to enjoy the natural beauty and the parks that they own and have enjoyed for decades.

From government-owned sources, I think it was public knowledge that they assessed 473 sites in Alberta's parks system. Out of those 473, they have selected 164 sites for partnerships. What that partnership means for Alberta: the government will sell this off to private companies who may not even be Albertans. We hear in this Chamber all the time that they will be standing up for Albertans, but here we are seeing the changes, that they are taking things away from Albertans in every possible way, whether it's their parks system, whether it's their public lands, whether it's their teaching assistants, whether it's their services. They're taking away from Albertans what they have by this piece of legislation and this change. It's very clear that this amendment will change how government manages public lands, which are owned by Albertans. Just to get the facts straight, prior to this change only Albertans – Alberta residents or Alberta companies or majority Albertan-owned companies – could obtain grazing leases, public lands for the benefit of Albertans.

One of their key platform promises: creating jobs. I would argue that under the previously existing regime, the bigger regime, these leases and these public lands could only be sold to Albertans and companies that are majority Albertan, so Albertans were benefiting, jobs were created for Albertans, prosperity was created for Albertans, and land ownership stayed in Alberta. What this change will allow is for every Canadian resident to be able to buy Alberta's lands. Every Canadian company will be able to buy Alberta parks, Alberta forests, Alberta's public land. Now, I'm not sure how this change is creating jobs for Albertans, how it's benefiting Albertans.

That's why this amendment is important. This amendment is trying to protect Alberta's public land, and I urge all members of this House to support this amendment.

Another reason – I think I will leave it at that.

The Acting Chair: I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen to join debate.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of things with regard to the Member for Calgary-McCall, who is lying to the Chamber. I withdraw and apologize for that, but that's what he's doing. The reality is that you have just listened to an entire how-it-works. He can't point to one park that's actually shut. He can't do that inside the Chamber. He's just making things up. I have no doubt that he does know that 20 campgrounds that were under the parks act are moving to the Public Lands Act, that Albertans get to still camp on. He knows that. He still continues to make things up inside the Chamber, as they do all across the province.

That's the problem with the NDP. They continue over and over to mislead Albertans, to follow the politics of fear and smear, Madam Chair, and continue to cause Albertans to feel distress when it comes to their campgrounds. The reality is that they can't point it out. In fact, they go so far as to make it up. As I said, the hon. member – actually, I can't say the hon. member since he said that Margaret Thatcher should have died 30 years ago. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar held a press conference, as I was saying earlier in my remarks, and said that Dinosaur provincial park – you can go check it; it's on his Facebook page, on the NDP's Facebook page, too – is shut. Shut. Meanwhile Dinosaur provincial park has not shut once. That's a verifiable fact. Its campgrounds have been full all the way through the summer. Yes, during COVID there were some restrictions on all campgrounds during that process, although Alberta was the fastest to remove those restrictions, and Dinosaur provincial park was used during that entire time despite the NDP making things up.

Now, the hon. member says that we did not consult with Albertans about using a partnership opportunity when it came to

managing campgrounds in particular as well as our landscapes. But the reality is that if you look at the United Conservative Party platform, underneath the environment section it says that one of our platform commitments is to "strengthen partnerships with non-profit park societies across Alberta." That's what the provincial government is doing.

10:20

At the end of the day what this comes down to – the NDP is so transparent. You're seeing it with the hon. the labour minister's bill when it comes to union dues, and I want to say, through you to him, Madam Chair, thank you for doing this on behalf of my constituents who've asked for this for a long time, giving them the opportunity to say to their unions: no, you can't take my union dues and give it to unions who then give it to political organizations or other campaigns to fight against pipelines or fight against things that create the livelihood for us. The NDP blows up over that. You saw it. They blow up over that because at the end of the day they'll do anything to protect their union bosses.

I have to say, Madam Chair, that it's a bit confusing because when it comes to doctors, who receive 10 per cent of the entire provincial budget, are in the 1 per cent club, certainly, of the province – and they work hard. We appreciate our doctors. That's why we made sure they're the highest paid doctors in Canada. But when it comes those doctors, they fought to make sure those doctors could get significant raises every year while they held nurses at zero, and they have not, the NDP, even stood up in this House once to fight for nurses. Instead, they continue to fight for the 1 per cent club with the doctors. I don't get that. That's actually almost an anomaly, usually, when it comes to unions.

But it's core when we go to this issue. The problem they have is that they don't want communities to have a say in their landscapes. They don't trust communities to be able to help co-manage some of these places. They want to continue to make sure that their friends will only have that, or of course their ultimate goal, with their close allies in CPAWS, is to be able to shut down those landscapes. They proved that with their plan west of Rocky Mountain House, that they referred to as the Bighorn. Their plan was to shut all access to that landscape. Shut it. Nobody can go there at all. But when the United Conservative Party, the now Alberta government, comes along and says, "We will partner with places like Sylvan Lake," the NDP will then go across the province and say that those parks are being sold.

Well, here's what's interesting. I didn't really have enough time to talk about it last time I was speaking on this. The Sylvan Lake plan was done by the Member for Lethbridge-West when she was the minister of environment. She brought forward a partnership with the community of Sylvan Lake. I don't agree with her on many things; I do agree with her on that. It made sense. The entire provincial park was inside that municipality. The municipality said: here, give that to us; we're in a better position to be able to manage it. There are no provincial park employees anywhere near Sylvan Lake. They're usually dealing with things associated with Kananaskis or out on the eastern slopes. Sylvan Lake manages that campground and manages it very well now, Madam Chair.

Now, Alberta environment still has our conservation officers dealing with fisheries there, fish and wildlife officers dealing with enforcement issues. Our biologists still work within that park, and Albertans still have an opportunity to be able to recreate inside that landscape, and that is what the NDP wants to stop? Well, why does the NDP want to stop it? Well, they don't want to stop it. That's why they never argued about it when they were in government, because it makes good sense. The reality is that the NDP wants to make things up, scare Albertans, and say that something is

happening that is not happening. It is absolutely ridiculous that they continue to do it and, further to that, has absolutely nothing to do with Bill 22 because Bill 22 – the member barely touched it, but he got to it finally – has to deal with grazing leases and agriculture landscapes.

Now, he says: what happens with jobs? Well, the Saskatchewan government and the B.C. government now allow our cattle ranchers on those border areas to be able to purchase grass next to their farms that are associated with that or to lease grass next to their farms to be able to operate their cattle operations, and in exchange for that our farmers and ranchers that are in those exact same situations can do that back and forth. Seems to make sense. That's free trade. That's something the Premier campaigned on. It's something that's very important to the hon. the Premier, to be able to make sure that we can work across interprovincial lines to be able to create economic prosperity inside this province. It works. Why would the NDP be opposed to that? Why would the NDP be opposed to us working on interprovincial barriers?

The NDP rose today inside of this Chamber and wants you to believe that Ontario cattle ranchers are going to come and buy up all of the grazing leases in this province, which, by the way, by law must be grazed. You can't just go buy a grazing lease and not put cows on it. We have rules for that. It must be grazed. They are going to load up all of their cows and move them all the way to Alberta just for the grazing season, and then they're going to load them all back on the train, and they're going to bring them home. I don't think the NDP understand how the cattle industry works. I used to always say to their former agriculture minister, "Which side of the cattle got up first?" and he used to get very, very confused about that in question period because they don't understand the agriculture industry at all.

If their argument really is inside this Chamber that they don't want to support a red tape reduction bill that will make it easier for our lease operators to be able to interact with the provinces of Saskatchewan and B.C. and vice versa because that is somehow going to cause an influx of people to come take over Alberta land – it's ridiculous that the idea is that everybody would move their cows here just to be able to graze our grass. The reality is this: the NDP have no better argument than to make things up because that's all they have left. They're the party of fear and smear. They're the party of making things up, Madam Chair, and it's why they're going to be in opposition forever, and I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure that we remove at least a half more of these guys' seats in 2023.

The Acting Chair: Hon. members, we are on amendment A2 on Bill 22 if there are any other hon. members wishing to rise in debate.

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Acting Chair: We are back on the main bill, Bill 22, if there are any hon. members wishing to speak. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate being able to speak yet again here to Bill 22. I must admit that I found it very entertaining from the Government House Leader. You know, I have never had any problems admitting when I have less than stellar knowledge in an area. Certainly, agriculture would not be one of those, but I might surmise that the Government House Leader has no clue about how unions work.

Anyway, we are back here. I mentioned earlier, Madam Chair, that I had some very serious concerns around ramping up the timelines, potentially, around projects that are being proposed to be

built within the province, specifically around consultations. Our indigenous peoples deserve to have very fulsome consultations, productive consultations, not just somebody showing up, taking a few notes, and considering that consultation because, you know: the clock is running here; we have to get this project built.

The other thing that I thought was very, very interesting: as I said, having been fortunate enough to serve in the 29th Legislature, I certainly remember the members opposite on the government benches and in the government caucus who served also in that 29th Legislature. Whenever they saw any kind of move to allow a minister to do more or even be perceived to do more, quite honestly, Madam Chair, they would light their hair on fire. Yet here we are in Bill 22, taking away cabinet oversight and just allowing the minister to make all kinds of decisions on behalf of Albertans. I'm almost positive that, roles reversed, we would have another scenario where we would have a lot of hair on fire in this Chamber, figuratively speaking, of course, because we wouldn't want to set off the sprinkler systems in here. It would cause all kinds of problems. So to be in a position to just simply mandate these things that are going on is a concern for Albertans.

You know, I have to say, Madam Chair, that when the Government House Leader talked about all of the things that we used to do and everything like that, I have a significant trust issue with the government. I remember the Premier saying, you know: I will disclose my donors. It didn't happen. I remember the government saying that we will protect public health care. We're now looking at a system that could have people checking their credit rating before they have their pulse checked.

10:30

I guess my hope is – the Minister of Environment and Parks has said that parks aren't going to be sold off, so hopefully that won't be the case. You'll have to excuse me if I don't hold my breath, just to be on the safe side.

I guess another thing that concerns me around this is the ability to, shall we say, maybe get creative with some of these deals, leaving it all to the minister. We've already seen some, shall we say, appointments that have been made. You know, one minute we're talking about qualifications, and the next minute we're doing this over here. Just the way the language is structured gives me pause – it gives me pause – but I'm hoping that we won't see anything like that. I guess I have to say: how is this red tape? I mean, I appreciate the Government House Leader talking about working collaboratively between provinces, and hopefully that same zeal will be brought forward, for instance, with our small brewers to gain access to other provinces, like everybody else can come in.

That said, I'm not dissuaded yet. I do have another amendment, and I will pass those forward to you and await your instructions.

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, this amendment will be known as amendment A3. If you'd like to read it into the record, that would be great.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 22, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020, be amended by striking out section 10.

I'd already provided a few brief comments around that. You know, if members that served in the 29th are true to their word and they are very, very concerned about any additional powers that a minister should be receiving, then it would make sense to take out this section, just based on that alone. So I certainly look forward to seeing the response on this. If that is indeed the case, I would urge members to support this amendment and, you know, hopefully give

Albertans a little bit of confidence in what they say and then, of course, what they do later on.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on amendment A3 as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Acting Chair: We are back on the main bill, Bill 22.

I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Chair: I see the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I would move that we rise and report progress on Bill 22.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, does the Assembly agree in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. The motion is carried and so ordered.

Government Motions

Racism

24. Mr. Kenney moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) condemns racism and all forms of bigotry and hatred;
- (b) affirms the commitment of Alberta to human dignity and equality of all before the law;
- (c) acknowledges the pernicious and durable nature of antiblack racism;
- (d) acknowledges a tragic history of racism directed at indigenous people in Canada; and
- (e) urges the government to consider these issues in its ongoing review of the Police Act.

Mr. Deol moved that the motion be amended by striking out clause (e) and substituting the following:

- (e) urges the government to ensure that these issues and the voices of racialized communities are considered in its ongoing review of the Police Act by immediately establishing an advisory panel
 - (i) to conduct hearings throughout the province to examine and make recommendations in respect of systemic racism in Alberta,
 - (ii) that consists of members of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, provincial indigenous

leadership, and Black Lives Matter chapters of Alberta, and

- (iii) to publish a report with its findings and recommendations no later than October 1, 2020.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment July 8: Ms Notley]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen to speak.

Mr. Ellis: Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I am honoured to stand up in support of the motion. I know that we are talking about the amendment. I would like to outline my experience over the last several years as to my concerns in regard to the amendment, which the members opposite certainly have brought forward.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that racism, discrimination, and hatred cannot and will not be tolerated, full stop. The civil unrest that is currently going on in society certainly breaks my heart, which is why in 2016 it was I who stood alone in regard to the discriminatory practice of police carding. I would like to outline this through what I would argue to be a very compelling case. It was I who met with Black Lives Matter when the members opposite, under the leadership of the then Justice minister, did not meet with Black Lives Matter, which, quite frankly, shocked that organization at that particular time and, quite frankly, in fact, even shocked myself.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the practice of police carding, I think we need to put it in perspective, and we need to talk about section 9 of the Charter of Rights. Now, section 9 of the Charter of Rights says, "Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned." It protects citizens from unlawful detainment by the government. That was a position that not only I had but was consistent with the Constitution. Section 9, again, of the Charter of Rights stated this.

That, however, was not the position of the then government, which was the NDP. What that government believed was that that was just good old community policing, that detaining somebody and discriminating against them based upon their socioeconomic status, based upon the colour of their skin, and based upon their culture was good old community policing. It's not true, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I raised this in this Chamber starting November 8, 2016: "Recording their personal [identification] violates their fundamental right against arbitrary detention. It's... a form of psychological detention." Something that I said.

10:40

What I was met with by the NDP was: well, the process of street checks or of checkups can encompass a number of things and can encompass carding. I indicated that it violates the privacy rights of tens of thousands of Albertans given the research that shows that carding results in institutional racism at the hands of the police. What did I hear from the members opposite? Silence. And as the Member for Edmonton-Meadows has said on a number of occasions, silence means that you're complicit. Not my words, Mr. Speaker. Those are the words of the NDP. They were silent on this issue.

Let me go a little further, Mr. Speaker, because I raised the issue on a number of occasions. Let's fast-forward even to March 16, 2017. The member opposite, the then Justice minister: "Consulting with communities and police about... whether police need to say in every instance [that] you are not required to provide this information," as we were referencing to police carding. Well, there are good, honest people within this province, and the good, honest

people within this province listen to what the police have to say. I appreciate that. But we have the Constitution, which protects these citizens against the arbitrary detention of its citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I brought it forward again. I said:

The issue of carding relates specifically to the Charter and this government has a track record of failing to grasp the essence of the Charter and given that section 9 of the Charter and related Supreme Court rulings guard against arbitrary detention for all Canadians . . . why do we need a different model for Albertans when the Charter applies equally to all citizens of Canada, when all peace officers simply need to do is abide by the reasonable suspicion standard as set by the Supreme Court of Canada?

Do you want to know the answer I got?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not really sure where the member opposite got his law degree, but I might suggest he goes back to school.

I think that over the last several years we've determined who needs to go back to school.

Let's also talk about this history. I went back to 2016. Let's go back even further. Let's go back to September 17, 2015. Police Carding Undermines Reconciliation: Treaty 6 grand chiefs brought this to the attention of that government. "Two First Nations Chiefs say that police street checks in Edmonton erode trust within the community – with one chief warning it could jeopardize the reconciliation process." Yeah. That's right, Mr. Speaker. Silence again.

When they did speak, here's what they said, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Justice minister, who is now the Member, of course, for Calgary-Mountain View, said this: there is no evidence that carding discriminates against racial groups or violates other human rights. So it is completely disingenuous for them to bring forward any amendment or, in fact, for them to even speak on this issue, Mr. Speaker. This was brought to their attention on September 17, 2015. Then to listen to their leader talk about: well, they'd like to urge that this government

- (d) [acknowledge] a tragic history of racism directed at indigenous people in Canada; and, [finally]
- (e) [urge] the government to consider these issues in its ongoing review of the Police Act.

This was brought to their attention in 2015, and they did nothing, Mr. Speaker. In fact, they had support from a couple of police chiefs that, thank goodness, are no longer chiefs, that said that no changes were necessary to street checks at that particular time. That certainly was a concern.

But I stood alone, Mr. Speaker. I was on radio programs, talking to news programs, saying that, no, you cannot arbitrarily detain someone based upon the colour of their skin, based upon their socioeconomic background, based upon their culture. You can't do that. They were silent, and their silence, in their own words, means that they were complicit.

It says here, Mr. Speaker, on November 8, 2016, that I said that the police cannot just arbitrarily stop people on the street and demand identification from them. This is not really anything that is actually debatable here. This is section 9 of the Charter of Rights. I stated it over and over again. Carding is the recording of personal information by police without cause. Without cause. That means that the reasonable suspicion threshold has not been reached, and the NDP said: well, that's just good old community policing because community policing is about building relationships.

Now, clearly, that government at the time was receiving an extreme amount of public pressure. On November 21, 2016, the Alberta Justice minister developed street check guidelines for police. Okay. That's great. That's a start. That's right. That's a start, right? They were going to establish a working group after hearing concerns from communities that sometimes are feeling

targeted. You know, I can tell you that a former deputy chief and a former colleague of mine, Deputy Chief Sat Parhar, had indicated that, you know, they welcomed this because I know that in the Calgary Police Service they had checks and balances within that service to ensure that section 9 of the Charter of Rights was being adhered to. They had a civilian oversight that was, again, to make sure that section 9 was being complied with. That's a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

Well, there was further pressure that was being put on the NDP at that particular time. I continued stating on several different occasions, of course, that everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't believe that I was continuing to have to just really repeat the line that is specifically written in the Charter of Rights. I don't understand why there was even a doubt by that former government.

So EPS at that time decided to pivot. A couple of other police chiefs started to pivot, hearing the pressure that maybe the carding issue was not something that, really, people supported. That was a good thing. That was a good thing. I know that, you know, street checks, or what many critics call carding, is the police practice of randomly stopping people, questioning, and documenting people without cause. Again, the key: without cause. It's something that is enshrined in our Constitution that they cannot be arbitrarily detained, so it was good to see a pivot by police services, by the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to fast-forward a bit to June 27, 2017, where Black Lives Matter and the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women called that government for a province-wide ban on street checks. That's right. Silence again on that issue, not a word from that government. In fact, we have a quote here from the Member for Edmonton-Centre. When the practice of street carding was banned in Ontario and there was silence from the former government, the Member for Edmonton-Centre said that he wasn't really ready to say whether he supports the banning of street checks even though Ontario had done that. Exactly. What?

Let me just stress again: stopping somebody without cause based upon the discriminatory practice of the colour of one's skin, on their socioeconomic status, on their culture is something that cannot be tolerated. It was not an acceptable practice. I'm proud to say that there were mechanisms by some police services but not all police services, and that's what I was looking for at that time, Mr. Speaker. I gave them the answers to the test. I basically said that all you had to do was put mechanisms in place to ensure that there was consistency, that section 9 of the Charter of Rights was adhered to. I was met with nothing but silence, Mr. Speaker, and I was met with nothing that was being done.

10:50

In fact, one of these organizations said: "We believe that carding for no reason does not build relationships; rather, the contrary. It reinforces the attitude that aboriginal women are not worthy of the human rights most Canadians enjoy." Well, wait a second, Mr. Speaker. Didn't I rehear that the former minister said, and let me just remember this again: there is no evidence that carding discriminates against racial groups or violates other human rights. In law we call that an inconsistency. It's shameful – it's shameful – when people like Black Lives Matter, when people like the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women were asking for help, so it is completely disingenuous when I listen to the Leader of the Official Opposition when she talks about how she's going to support the indigenous community and stand up for all the vulnerable people. Well, these vulnerable people were asking for help when that party was in government, and they did nothing. They did nothing.

In fact, I'll fast-forward it for you again. Let's go to February 3, 2019, which is right before the election. The province promised a review of street checks 18 months ago. Where is it? There was nothing. In December '18 an independent report prepared by a Court of Appeal justice for the Ontario government determined that carding should be banned, concluded that random street checks, which take considerable time and effort for police services to conduct, have little to no . . .

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

Mr. Getson: Again, Mr. Speaker, I was very intrigued to hear the record being corrected on this subject, and to the Member for Calgary-West I would like to hear more if I may.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much. If I may continue, I'd like to thank that member for this additional time. Random street checks, which take considerable time and effort for police services to conduct, have little to no verifiable benefits relating to the level of crime or even arrests. In a statement that I made during that time, Mr. Speaker, I said: it is completely disappointing that the NDP have not come up with this or any outcome that is supposed to review what was initiated on this very important issue a few years ago.

I don't know how it could get any worse, but it does actually get even worse, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous persons were largely overrepresented in those street checks, with rates that were ranging from four to five times the rate of whites when only considering a single racial identity and 12 to 15 times when including individuals with multiple racial identities in the analysis. So the evidence was there. I think they were criticizing our government for wanting to talk to people one on one. Well, at least we have people within this government willing to talk to these organizations, willing to maybe make attempts to address this issue because it didn't happen under that previous government.

I also want to state one more thing, Mr. Speaker. When this did not happen, it was one of our advocates, Bashir Mohamed, who led the charge of the groups' advocacy against street checks, who said that he had hoped to see a report by the spring of 2018. When that didn't happen, he said, he felt burned out and disillusioned by the process after not hearing anything. I just kind of feel like they went into a black hole and that they didn't want to deal with it: that's what he said about that former government. That's embarrassing. It's embarrassing that they are standing up here like the heroes of those who are the most vulnerable when, in fact, I clearly outlined a case, dating back to 2015, where they had the ability as government to deal with this issue, and they did nothing. They were first silent on the issue. They were complicit on that particular issue, and then when they did strike up a working group, nothing was ever achieved.

So I welcome this new government. The issue has been raised. It's been raised for several years. I really hope that the minister will take the time to address this, see what they can do within the Police Act itself. I will say, Mr. Speaker, based upon the case that I have just provided you, that I will not be supporting this amendment, but I will be supporting this motion, and I want to state again for the record that it is very important that everybody know this, that racism, discrimination, hatred cannot, will not be tolerated, and we need to do whatever we can as a people to ensure that this does not continue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there's approximately a minute left. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has risen.

Ms Issik: On 29(2)(a)?

The Speaker: That is on 29(2)(a).

Ms Issik: Sorry.

The Speaker: Is there anyone else that wishes to provide a brief question or comment on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak in this Assembly to Government Motion 24 and the amendment on the motion. It is very interesting, some of the words that have been brought forward by members of the government caucus and the government itself indeed in these last few weeks as we have debated this motion. We know that in these last few weeks and months we have seen an increase in awareness around issues such as Black Lives Matter, such as antiracism, and such as the effects that systemic racism has on our constituents and our communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that this Assembly stands against racism in all its forms, or at least members of both sides of this House have expressed that through their words here in this place. It is often said that actions speak louder than words, but I think we should talk about both. I think we should talk about the words that the Premier's chief speech writer, the person that literally has put words in his mouth, has stated. Indeed, the Premier's speech writer described residential schools as a "bogus genocide story" and that indigenous youth could be ripe recruits for violent insurgencies. In fact, as recently as 2016 Bunner described Wab Kinew, now leader of the Manitoba Official Opposition, as one of a group of "modern-day aboriginal nomads who migrate from conference to conference just as their ancestors pursued the buffalo." In 2015 Bunner refers to the "perverted sword of Islam" and writes following the Paris terrorist attacks: "amid evidence that the perpetrators were either home-grown Islamists or part of the great refugee tsunami, inevitably there are questions about how many barbarians are inside the gates."

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the countless examples of bigoted comments that are coming from this Premier's office. When we talk about including marginalized people, when we talk about having marginalized communities represented and understood and having antiracist discussions in this place, what we should be looking for is for the Premier to unreservedly disavow these comments and fire Paul Bunner. Instead, what we see is a Premier at a government caucus that stands by these words every single day. Every single day that Paul Bunner remains in the Premier's office is a day that they are condoning those statements. It is unacceptable that that man is able to continue to put words in the Premier's mouth.

Now, we also know, Mr. Speaker, that this government has a history in just the last year of making racist comments. It is very clear that we saw the Premier in this place during the COVID pandemic make statements such as that Dr. Tam, Canada's chief medical officer of health, was, quote, controlled by China. This stoked anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiments in the height of the COVID pandemic, which we are still in the middle of. It is abundantly clear that it is unacceptable to have these types of statements coming from our government, coming from our Premier, and coming from members of the government caucus. We saw as recently as 2013 that the Minister of Health said that he disliked living across from the Chinese consulate. Again and again in this

place the Premier, the Minister of Health, and other members of this government have refused to apologize for any of these statements.

11:00

Mr. Speaker, actions do speak louder than words, but we can look at both. We can say that both in the words of this government and in the actions of this government they are doing nothing on the racism file. Instead, what they are doing is that they are stoking racist sentiments, and they are indeed acting in manners which would offend many Albertans. It is simply untrue that this government could hold and claim to hold the moral high ground on racism. Indeed, I do not need to be lectured by government members on how the opposition does not understand the issues of racism.

We know that Albertans deserve a voice at the table. We know that Albertans understand that there are systemic barriers to accessing government programs and services. They understand that there are things like language barriers. They understand that we need to have larger discussions on how we want to interact with our government systems and our public services and our law enforcement agencies. They understand that these are real conversations we have to have.

But when this government refuses to apologize, refuses to condemn, and refuses to address any of the clearly racist comments, whether they are anti-Asian or anti-indigenous comments, coming out of the Premier's office, coming out of the Premier's front bench, then it becomes abundantly clear that this government is not serious about taking action. Instead, what this government is doing is that they are moving motions as window dressing. They are moving motions to try and distract Albertans from their actions. They are trying to distract Albertans from the clearly racist comments that they are making. It's something that I think members of this government caucus should be ashamed of.

When the government whip rises in this place and tries to lecture the opposition about our record on racism, perhaps he needs to look inside his own caucus and question why he is not questioning his own Premier, why he is not questioning his leader as to why their leader is allowing such a man to continue to put words in his mouth and speak on behalf of the government, Mr. Speaker. We know that this is the reality we live in today. The reality we live in is that Paul Bunner continues to write the speeches of the Premier of Alberta, continues to put words, literally, in the mouth of the Premier of Alberta, and this is a man who has shown for decades that he has been bigoted and has been anti-Islamist and anti-indigenous.

Mr. Yao: A point of order.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order has been called.

Point of Order Language Causing Disorder

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, 23(h), (i), (j). I mean, he's saying commentary to stir up some negative feelings. He's saying things that are quite clearly wrong. He states that we are stoking racism, that we're clearly making racist comments. He makes insinuations and assassinations on the character of someone who is on the staff here in the Legislature, who has demonstrated time and time again to be a very competent individual, who is not racist, who clearly writes quite controversial things that you may object to. These things were done decades ago.

I mean, do I point out that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is a former leader of the Communist Party and would like communism to rule in Canada and that this legislation not even be here? Do we point those things out?

Member Loyola: Point of order on this point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Yao: I mean, the man also defended, you know . . .

The Speaker: Member, unless you have additional information to add that's relevant to the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South . . .

Mr. Yao: The member needs to pull his comments and needs to apologize because his insinuations are rude and just unworthy of this House. He needs to be very careful that he doesn't continue to . . .

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you. I got the gist.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak to the point of order.

The Speaker: Okay. I'll make that determination. I have no problem. I'm happy to have you speak to this point of order, and I'm also happy to hear other concerns that you may or may not have, but at this point in time I'd like you to address the point of order that we are currently discussing.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that the member did get up and speak to and quote Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j). Of course, the Member for Edmonton-South is mainly sharing comments that have already been stated and are part of the record, have been in the media, and he's basically just introducing those comments that have already been made publicly into the House, Mr. Speaker. I see no point of order here. He is not trying to create disorder. He's not trying to impute false motives. He is simply bringing what is part of the public record into the House.

The Speaker: Are there other submissions? If not, I'm prepared to rule.

I appreciate the submissions from both of the hon. members. I would agree that this is not a point of order. There is always a consistent amount of discussion and debate around making comments about individuals who are unable to defend themselves inside the Assembly, with sometimes a wide range of discussion around that particular point of exactly who that applies to. In this case I will rule that there is no point of order and that this is a matter of debate.

Debate Continued

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, it is completely inflammatory that this member would get up in this House and deliberately state – I believe he stated that I used to be the leader of the Communist Party. Nothing could be more outrageous and a lie, and I would ask that he withdraw and apologize for making that statement within the House.

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

The Speaker: Well, you could rise and speak to the point of order that is before the Assembly. You're not able to call a point of order

on his point of order. However, if you would like to do that after we've addressed the point of order, if you would like to address comments that were made, of course you'd be more than welcome to do so.

I will provide caution to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. We were so close – we were so close – and then you had to go and use unparliamentary language in your argument. The difficulty when a member does that is it prevents the ability for decorum to be raised again, which I don't believe was your intent. I think that you raised a very reasonable point of order, one which I'm not sure if somebody on the government side of the House wants to defend or not.

I am prepared to rule, or perhaps the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo would like to withdraw his comments, because certainly that's where this will end up. I don't think it's reasonable to make those assertions that you made during your point of order.

Ms Rosin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stand up and . . .

The Speaker: Sorry. You can't just stand up and start talking in the Assembly.

Ms Rosin: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. No problem. You can have a seat. The opportunity to speak to the point of order was when I asked if there was anyone who would like to speak.

Now that I've ruled, the hon. member can withdraw his comments, and we can all move forward.

Mr. Yao: I will withdraw my comments.

The Speaker: I think that we've addressed the situation with the use of the word "lie," and the hon. member can withdraw those remarks as well.

Member Loyola: I withdraw the remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are on Government Motion 24, on amendment A1. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South was speaking some time ago, and I believe that he has eight minutes and 55 seconds remaining in his remarks.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to continue in this place, especially after being given the opportunity to catch my breath. However, I believe I was speaking on the actions of this government and how we want to actually address racism and speak to the issues of racism.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken at length tonight already about how I believe this government is not taking action on things like anti-indigenous racism or antiblack racism. I've spoken at length about how this government's actions show that they are clearly out of step with what Albertans would expect from a government.

11:10

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to some information that came to light just a couple of weeks ago here. As recently as the beginning of this month and in early July the University of Alberta along with I believe it was the Angus Reid Institute issued a study that said that a majority of Asian Canadians had experienced some form of anti-Asian racism. They had experienced, whether it was an insult or some sort of a direct attack, anti-Asian racism. I rose in this place not that long ago and asked the ministers in the front bench here

what they were doing to try and combat anti-Asian racism. Basically, instead of getting any answer, I got political talking points.

Instead of actually speaking to the issues, things like what the Health minister was saying around living across from the Chinese consulate, instead of actually answering questions about things like what the Premier had stated around Dr. Tam and being controlled by China, instead of answering any questions, the ministers in this place got up and actually defended those comments and made excuses for those comments. Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely unacceptable. It is absolutely unacceptable that members of this place would make excuses for comments that Asian Canadians have taken to be offensive and have taken to be anti-Asian sentiment.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it's abundantly clear that when we try to talk about racism in this place, when we try to talk about how we want to deal with racism in this place and accepting and consulting marginalized communities, we have to have a larger discussion about what elected officials will be doing and how elected officials want to address these concerns. The answer is not in the government finger pointing and saying that the opposition's record is poor on racism. That is not the answer on how we want to deal with antiracism in Canada. It is becoming clear that being not racist is not enough. When this government makes it normal and allows and makes it acceptable to have people with racist views in the Premier's office, when they make it acceptable to apologize for racist views in their benches and to excuse racist views in their benches, it becomes clear that this normalization of racism and systemic racism is not going to be good enough.

Instead, what we have to do is that we have to strive to be antiracist. We have to strive to call out this racism when we see it. We have to strive to actually actively engage in removing this racism from our institutions. That would include things like firing Paul Bunner, like firing the chief speech writer for the Premier, who literally puts words in the Premier's mouth. Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable to have anybody refer to the history of residential schools that we have here in this country as a "bogus genocide story." It is unacceptable to have anybody in this place refer to Islam as a "perverted sword." I think it's very clear that the vast majority of Albertans reject these comments. They completely reject these ideals, and I think it's completely clear that this government is aware of that.

That is why they are doing some dog whistle politics and bringing in motions like this. Instead of actually going in and taking action, they are deciding to only talk, and, Mr. Speaker, they have many words. They have many words which include blaming the opposition, blaming the opposition for not taking enough action, but it's becoming very clear that this government has no intention of taking any action at all. It has no intention of actually dissuading these types of comments from within their own caucus, let alone within their own senior staff, and that is what is extremely and profoundly disappointing. That is what is extremely and profoundly disappointing to members of this Assembly and to Albertans, because we know that here in Alberta racism continues to be alive and true.

Just last week there were Nazi symbols spray-painted across my constituency, across vehicles in my constituency and property in my constituency. Yes, some people will say that this is simply kids being kids, but the reality is that people felt emboldened to put these symbols on vehicles. People felt emboldened to deface property with these symbols, and that is simply unacceptable. We have to take a stand in this place that that cannot continue. We have to take a stand in this place that we will be actively against this type of hate speech, that we will be actively against this type of action. It's abundantly clear that this government is not willing to take those

actions, that this government is not willing to move on and actually fire people who are racist that work for them, that this government is not willing to move on and actually apologize for comments that were made even if they were a few years ago. They are not willing to actually apologize for comments that have offended the sensibilities of visible minorities and marginalized communities. So, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that this government and government caucus are not interested in taking action on racism, are not interested in actually supporting the antiracist initiatives. Indeed, I believe that they should be ashamed of the stance they are taking and ashamed to be rejecting this amendment.

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

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 29

Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020

[Adjourned debate July 7: Mr. Schmidt]

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see you back in the chair, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 29. As you can imagine, I have a number of serious concerns about this bill and wanted to have an opportunity to speak to it and would particularly like to reinforce some of the comments made by the very people who are most likely to be affected by it, and those are the municipalities and the people that they represent in the municipalities.

Now, we know that in this particular bill there are substantial changes to the financing aspect of municipal government elections, and that decision to change the financial arrangements in elections in municipalities has received a fairly resounding negative response from the very municipalities that it will largely affect. We know that the presidents of both the AUMA and the RMA have very politely, of course, expressed their concerns about the intention of this bill and the effect that this bill is going to have on the elections that they, of course, are a part of. We know that mayors of both Edmonton and Calgary have also again expressed their concerns.

It's very difficult for all of these people to do it as, in fact, the municipalities are the child of the provincial government. In fact, they have control exerted on them by the provincial government, so a challenge to the very government that controls their finances, that controls their very existence is one that requires great tact and, of course, some great degree of courage, yet they have all done so. I know that they haven't come out in a blistering attack – well, I suppose the mayor of Calgary sort of did – because what they want here is that they really want a change, and they don't want to get into a fight. Instead, what they would like to see is to see the government of Alberta rescind this decision and perhaps spend some time talking with the municipalities about, you know, the reasoning behind the decision and, more importantly perhaps, the implications of the decisions that are being made here in this bill.

I know that in various newspaper articles that have consulted with researchers and academics in the area of municipal governments, there have also been a fair number of commentators concerned about the direction of this bill and worried about where this will go. For example, one such commentator indicated that they've looked at the argument that somehow this bill is about levelling the playing field and has responded that they didn't in fact

understand the nature of that argument at all because, in fact, what it does not do is – it does nothing to ensure fairness. In fact, it is much more likely to change the level playing field into one in which those with the deepest pockets have the greatest amount of ability to influence the decisions that are being made.

11:20

Let's just take a look for a second about what decisions it is that people are very concerned about. Now, first of all, the primary concern is the amount of money, the amount of money not only in terms of individual donors but the amount of money that can be put in, spread over multiple candidates, and therefore one donor having the ability to spend literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in municipal elections to influence municipal elections throughout the province of Alberta. I know that from time to time members from the government side of the House wax poetic about some belief that there are foreign influences on Canadian politics, and although there's really no substantial evidence to indicate that there is, they frequently bemoan the idea that someone outside of your jurisdiction would have the ability to use funding to influence a decision or a political process within your jurisdiction. If that is their philosophical principle and that is their philosophical concern, then of course you would think that they would be equally concerned about people outside of any municipality influencing that municipality, yet here we have exactly the opposite behaviour.

Talking out of one side of your mouth, acting out of the other: there are words to describe that which I won't use because I'm trying to not start another fight this evening. I see support all around the House for me not doing that. But I just want to point out the fact that if you were going to make a decision to act, you really should have thought about: what is the underlying philosophical belief system that instigates the decision that you're going to employ? Why is it that you're choosing to do what you're choosing to do? And if you have an already well-known, established philosophical position that says, "No one should be able to unduly influence decisions in another jurisdiction," then of course you should act on that philosophical position, and you should say: let's keep that rule true at all times and in all places. But it appears that what is good for the goose is not good for the gander in this particular situation.

Of course, that leads us to worry about why it is that the government would choose to go in this particular direction. The bill in this case removes the limit of \$4,000 for donations and increases that to \$10,000. Already, we have a concern. We have a concern because, of course, the vast majority of people simply don't have \$10,000. In fact, the vast majority of people never put in the \$4,000 in the first place, and that tells us something. That tells us that there was no problem with the limit, that the vast majority of people were coming nowhere near the limit, so the limit wasn't stopping the vast majority of Albertans from participating in their electoral process. It was not an inhibitor, it was not a barrier, it was not a problem for the electoral processes as they occurred in this province. But moving it up to \$10,000 has a very particular effect not on the great majority of people – I would suggest, in fact, probably not on 90 to 95 per cent of the people – who donate to political campaigns; it only has an effect on a very small group of people.

So what we have here is a government making a decision to find themselves in alignment with a very narrow selection of society, typically described as the 1 per cent in political discourse, and making the decision that this small group of people should be given every opportunity to supersede the influence that is available to the average citizen in the province of Alberta and to shift from having funding available to everybody to funding that is really only available to the few.

With that, I will end my comments.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've had a number of bills before us that actually speak to reintroducing dark money and not only dark money but large amounts of money into political processes, specifically in elections within the province, yet now we have here another one being brought forward by this UCP government, wanting to take us back in time to a time where big money in politics, American-style, big PACs are going to be reintroduced into municipal and school board elections.

An Hon. Member: The good old days.

Member Loyola: The good old days, the good old days of the Conservatives coming back again, you know. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford spoke at length about it, so I don't want to drag it on too long.

For that reason, I'm going to introduce an amendment, sir. I'll wait until those have been handed over to the table.

The Speaker: These guys will grab it, and as soon as I have a copy and the table has a copy, I'll ask you to proceed.

Member Loyola: Okay. I'll just read this into . . .

The Speaker: Just hang on, if you wouldn't mind. Thank you.

Hon. members, the amendment will be referred to as REF1.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has 13 minutes and 51 seconds remaining.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to read it into the record. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 29, Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 29, Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2."

Because we've had a number of these types of bills coming before the House, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that – and I'm not only speaking on my own behalf; I'm actually speaking on behalf of several constituents. You know, I've brought it to their attention, what's actually happening with these bills in terms of how this UCP government wants to reintroduce big money into the political process and specifically in the elections, and people are just dumbfounded about this whole situation, the fact that such large amounts of money want to be reintroduced into elections. Of course, what else could we expect from this United Conservative government? Yes, going back to the good old days again, like, with specific interests being able to actually influence the electoral process.

For that reason, I think it's so important that we actually send this particular bill, Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020, to committee and we actually give the Alberta public the opportunity to voice their opinion so that this UCP government can actually hear it straight from the people of Alberta, how they do not want big money back in the political process in this province. I think it's only fair that we give the opportunity for people to voice their opinions on it. I mean, when we were in government, our very first bill, as people may well know, was to actually ban corporate and

union donations. We kept that promise. It was part of our platform. We respected the Alberta public. They wanted this particular move, yet now here we are. It's 2020, and we're seeing the reintroduction of big money into the political process once again.

11:30

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I highly encourage all members of this House to support this amendment. Let's send it to committee. Let's give Albertans the opportunity to voice their opinion on this particular subject and then follow through with what the Alberta public really wants, and that is no more big money in the political process.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to amendment REF1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: I'll just speak briefly to it. I agreed with the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie that there are people who are concerned with the direction that this Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020, is taking us and would like an opportunity to address their elected representatives. I think the committee that has been talked about here, Resource Stewardship, has been mentioned a number of times as a place in other circumstances to refer things to and I think just receives some different mandates or additional mandates.

When I look at the information that's coming my way from citizens and others who are in stakeholder organizations, I clearly see that they don't agree with not all of the amendments but a lot of the substantive ones that have to do with the amount of money that candidates can accumulate. I also see that people are concerned about referendums being put on the local municipal ballot. They're concerned that it'll defocus from the work that they want to do in the local communities and take people to the ballot box for reasons other than local issues.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly support the recommendation, the amendment, brought up by my colleague and think it would provide an interesting juxtaposition to hear the views of Albertans in this regard. Really, we have an opportunity to get this right, and I just don't believe we're going in the right direction with some of the work that's in the actual act and would like to see the amendment supported as well.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment?

If there are no others, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Speaker: We are on Bill 29, the Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020, at second reading. Is there anyone wishing to speak?

If there are none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. members. I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 26 Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise and to speak to Bill 26, the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020, an act that I think we've spent quite a bit of time talking about in regard to, you know, the importance of referendums but also the concerns that the opposition has when it comes to the amount of money that has now been increased in relation to Bill 26. What we've seen – and it's been in bills 26, 27, and 29 – is that there's a lot of money that's now been added in for third-party advertising and fundraising.

What we see with Bill 26 is that currently the piece of legislation says that any third-party advertiser who spends less than \$350,000 does not have to provide audited expenses to the Chief Electoral Officer. They still have to report that they've spent the money, but they don't have to demonstrate a proof of what they are reporting as being actuals to what they've spent. An example would be someone who says that they've spent \$349,000 on print advertising when, in fact, they've spent \$349,000 on TV ads or something like that.

There is some concern around the transparency of this big money that we are seeing being reintroduced into different levels of potential elections that will be called. We know that there is a potential for a referendum to be called during the next municipal election, and it's the prerogative of the government to do that and to create the question. The concern, again, though, is that that's a lot of money, \$500,000, per third-party advertiser to be able to be pro or con on a referendum question. And then, of course, that same third party under Bill 27 could also fund raise for a Senator or fund raise under Bill 29 for a municipal candidate. We start to see these numbers significantly increasing when we see a variety of different elections happening at the same time.

Again, it's not that we don't support referendums, but we do have some concerns around the reporting of where the money is going and what it's being spent on. Of course, the potential, when you have three different types of elections all happening at the same time, is that there could be certain individuals that would be able to influence all three different pieces of the election process, whether it be a referendum question, whether it be supporting a certain Senator running on behalf of a certain party and/or an individual who is running for city council or school board.

I do have an amendment, and I will be really quick in the amendment. I will take a copy. Mr. Chair, do you want me to read it, or do you want me to wait?

The Deputy Chair: Yes, please. Go ahead and read it into the record.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: For those of you who would like a copy of it, just put up your hand and it'll be delivered. There's also the opportunity to get it at the tables in the back corners as well.

For the benefit of everybody in the House, this will be referred to as amendment A1.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, amendment A1 reads as follows: the Member for Edmonton-Manning to move that Bill 26, the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020, be

amended in section 11(7) in the proposed section 44.9499992(1) by striking out “\$350 000” and substituting “\$100 000.”

Now, the reason for this amendment, Mr. Chair, is that currently, like I said, the legislation says that audited expenses do not have to be provided to the Chief Electoral Officer if they, the individual or third party, spend less than \$350,000. What we see in other areas, including the Election Act, is that the cap is actually \$100,000.

11:40

For consistency purposes and for transparency and given the fact that, you know, we have seen this happening in other provincial elections such as the one that happened a year ago or a year and a half ago now, \$100,000 is reasonable, and people are able to provide the audited expenses based on that \$100,000. To increase it to \$350,000 for only one piece – and I know the government will say that this is red tape reduction, but the reality is that it's a lot of money. It would be fair for Albertans to know what third-party advertisers are spending that money on so that they know exactly where it's going and what it's being used for in regard to the election.

I would encourage all members to look at being consistent across all pieces of legislation and support the amendment to have audited statements over \$100,000 be reported instead of \$350,000.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members looking to join debate on amendment A1 to Bill 26?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to the bill proper, Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020, are there any hon. members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again I rise to speak to an amendment that I will be moving. I have an amendment to introduce. Would you like me to read it into the record?

The Deputy Chair: Sure. Yeah. Please go ahead.

Ms Sweet: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020, be amended in section 11(7) in the proposed section 44.94995(2) by striking out “the third party is so registered” and substituting the following:

- (a) the third party is a registered third party, and
- (b) the third party has registered with the Chief Electoral Officer whether they will promote or oppose the question or questions in the referendum to which the contributions or expenses relate.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

This will be referred to as amendment A2.

If the hon. member could please continue with her comments.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's pretty self-explanatory. Basically, what we're recommending to the House is that – based on the legislation as it is written right now, if there is a referendum question put to Albertans, there is no requirement at this time for any third party who is fund raising and advertising to acknowledge whether or not they are in support of the referendum question or opposed to the referendum question. And I think, again for transparency and for all Albertans to see how much money is being spent in regard to certain campaign questions, there is and could be a requirement and should be a requirement that when a third party registers with the Chief Electoral Officer, they identify

whether they are pro or opposed to the question. It's open, it's transparent, and then we can see clearly how much money was being influenced in regard to the pro and how much was being influenced in regard to the opposed.

With that, I will close my remarks.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members looking to join debate on amendment A2?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there members wishing to join debate on Bill 26?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 26 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.

Bill 22 Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020 (continued)

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. members. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered on this bill at this time? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

Member Loyola: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I do rise, as was the intention of the Member for Edmonton-Decore, who was hoping to introduce yet another amendment before the House. I do so on his behalf.

I'll hand those in. If you'd like, Mr. Chair, I can continue or read it into the record.

The Deputy Chair: Yeah. Please read it into the record.

For the benefit of everybody, it will be referred to as amendment A4. If you could please continue and then, once finished, just go ahead and continue with your remarks.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Decore I move that Bill 22, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020, be amended by striking out sections 5, 6, 7, and 8.

You know, we recognize that Energy Efficiency Alberta has been a success, and it's actually helping to grow the economy and to create jobs. It, of course, provided positive returns to Albertans. Energy Efficiency Alberta delivered \$850 million in economic growth between 2017 and 2019, and every dollar invested had a return of \$3.20. It cut 5.7 million tonnes between 2017 and 2019.

On several occasions members from the other side have gotten up and stated: well, we don't know what the outcomes of Energy Efficiency Alberta were. Yet there we have them. This is how we have chosen to move forward. Our hope is that by moving in this direction, we can actually work towards making this particular piece of legislation just that much better, Mr. Chair.

With that, I'll complete my remarks.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we are on amendment A4 of Bill 22, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020. Are there any hon. members wishing to join debate on A4? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

11:50

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment on the floor to Bill 22 brought forward by my colleague here to strike out sections 5, 6, 7, and 8.

I think that in what the government is doing with this red tape reduction act, there is very little in terms of red tape. Instead, they have included pretty significant and substantial changes in this piece of legislation. It makes changes to 14 different pieces of legislation across six ministries. Some changes may be not as significant and could have been included in a miscellaneous statutes act, but there are changes that are very significant, and they are deeply concerning. They do have serious consequences for Albertans, and we believe that the government has not consulted on many of those changes.

When the associate minister introduced these changes, he was asked by many journalists about different sections of this bill, and every time his response was that the minister responsible is the one who should be asked about these questions. Here in the House so far we have not heard the kind of explanation that will help us understand who was actually consulted by government on these changes, what the concerns were, who's asking for these changes, and all those things.

For instance, this bill is making changes to the Oil Sands Conservation Act, and they're pretty significant changes. There are sections in this piece of legislation that remove the cabinet opportunity to provide oversight on resource development. We have heard from well-respected legal scholars that these sections are not red tape. The duties that the Crown has are constitutional duties, and there is nothing, as such, of red tape to cut.

This amendment deals with sections 5, 6, 7, and 8 as well. In our opinion, the changes that are proposed within these sections are also fairly substantial, and they cannot be lumped just in one giant piece of legislation that is making changes to 14 different pieces of legislation. When we were in government, the then UCP opposition used to complain about, basically, two pieces of legislation within one legislation, and they used to call it omnibus legislation. A particular one that comes to mind is one piece of legislation that was making changes to the Labour Relations Code and employment standards. Both these areas are closely related, but at that time instead of debating those changes, the then opposition spent a lot of time, a lot of motions to lecture the government about how they're bringing in these omnibus bills and how that's not something democratic, how that takes away from them their ability to engage thoroughly in debate, and all those arguments.

Now, while they're in government, every piece of legislation is like that. It's an omnibus piece of legislation. It deals with often fairly unrelated pieces of legislation. If we talk about this piece of legislation, this deals with the Business Corporations Act, deals with the Oil Sands Conservation Act, deals with the Municipal Government Act, Environment and Parks, Service Alberta, all different ministries, and most of these changes are so significant that they can be stand-alone pieces of legislation and will require and deserve thorough debate in this House. Instead, they are lumped together, all these pieces of legislation.

With this amendment what we are doing is that we are trying to take out some of those changes that we think are substantial, fairly significant, and that do not fall within the scope of red tape. I've used this example before, and I will use it again. When we were in government, I guess, we also were trying our best to make our

programs, policies, and procedures better, more efficient. There was consideration of red tape, but in this legislation the changes that are made in sections 5, 6, 7, and 8 are substantial, and they don't fall within the scope of red tape.

That is why I'm urging all my colleagues in the House to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to join debate on amendment A4?

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to Bill 22 proper, are there any hon. members wishing to join debate on Bill 22?

Seeing none, are you prepared for the question on Bill 22, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 22 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.

I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

12:00

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report bills 22 and 26.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has risen.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 26, Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. That is carried and so ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

(continued)

Bill 34

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 34, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, is self-explanatory, a housekeeping piece of legislation that is common at the end of a session. My understanding is that the opposition has been well briefed on Bill 34, and I believe this will eventually earn the support of all members of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I will just take a moment. This is the first opportunity that we have heard this in second reading for Bill 34, correct?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Correct. So I move it.

The Acting Speaker: Just double-checking that you're moving it.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I was not clear on that. I do certainly move Bill 34 for second reading.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members looking to join debate on Bill 34? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has risen.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise this evening or this morning to speak to this Bill 34, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. I appreciate the minister moving this into debate, recognizing that it is primarily housekeeping. You know, in this instance the opposition did have the opportunity to get a briefing on this legislation, which hasn't always been the case on some more contentious pieces of legislation. I appreciate that opportunity as well. I think it's important as legislators that we have the opportunity as best as we can and as has been the tradition over several decades in this House, that there is an opportunity for technical briefings for the opposition when the government brings legislation forward. Once again, in this instance we had the opportunity to have preliminary discussions before it was introduced in the House, so I appreciate that, as I imagine all members of the opposition do.

Once again, just looking at this, it's primarily housekeeping changes within this legislation. You know, we had conversations about some things that we had brought up, and I think that some of that was addressed, so once again I appreciate that. The majority of the changes that are in here are in relation to forms and the move of forms from legislation to regulations, and in cases where there is no prescription for forms, the content will still be regulated by the minister or director. Overall what we see in here are some changes to several pieces of legislation. With that being said, they are relatively minor amendments, so at this point I think that I am prepared to support it unless anything pressing comes up.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I guess there was just one piece within this legislation that, hopefully, at some point we can get an answer to at some point before we vote. We'll see. There are changes in terms of a change that would, within this legislation, not allow the government or the LAO or the Speaker to be sued. I think that this was something that we brought up. Hopefully, we can get answers about why this change was made in the first place. I think that there's a need for clarification and how this could be perceived to impact the independence of the LAO and the offices of the Legislative Assembly. Looking further, this will likely mean Members' Services will have to have a meeting to deal with regulations and variances as proposed within this legislation. If that's not the case – maybe I'm reading the legislation wrong – then I would be happy to hear that addressed.

Either way, once again, I appreciate when we have these opportunities to actually discuss in a technical briefing what is actually included in the legislation beforehand. Hopefully, we can get back to a place in this Legislature where that relationship is strengthened and the government feels that it is for the betterment of all Albertans that those discussions are had so that everyone can be properly informed, including, in some instances, as we've seen, their own ministers.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I at this point feel that I can support this legislation unless, once again, something pressing comes up that we see further in this debate. With that being said, I will take my seat.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to add a question or comment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just a few brief comments. Of course, like my colleague who just spoke before me, I'm glad that the critic area had the opportunity to meet with the minister proposing this Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, to, you know, understand first and to raise concerns. As a result of those actions the government agreed to remove one area that we didn't agree with, that would give better opportunity to have full support for this Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, before us.

Just the opportunity to have a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs wasn't the case with regard to Bill 29. I have heard many of my colleagues say the same thing with regard to their critic areas with the bills that have been brought forward by government. That is regrettable, unfortunate, and certainly not the way that I remember operating when we were government.

The fact is that there are a number of acts that a number of amendments will be made to. It looks like there are about 15 acts or so that have needed amendments, and this is a typical way of addressing those. My former ministry officials brought similar kinds of amendments forward when we were in government, and we bundled them all into miscellaneous statutes acts. There were a couple or more that we had the opportunity to bring forward in our time as government. It doesn't always happen, Mr. Speaker, because the kind of legislative requirements of government don't always allow time for this sort of thing to take place, but I'm glad it has to update and improve the statutes that Albertans are governed by in this province.

Without further ado I'll take my seat and also indicate support for this.

12:10

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill 34, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. What we see in this bill, if this bill is passed, is it would change some of the business, I believe, that we conduct in the House. I understand the changes. It's taking in hand to support, I would say, a number of changes there.

The area that's being affected by the amendments: I would say that this act will make very minor amendments to a number of acts. Like, they include the Interpretation Act, the Petty Trespass Act, the safer communities, Provincial Offences Procedure Act, Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act, the Public Service Act. Those are the changes.

I just wanted to thank the member, actually, for moving this bill and also providing us the briefing notes for the bill and listening to the concerns of the opposition and, you know, removing the clause that we had concern with from the bill accordingly.

With my brief comments, you know, right now I would say that we support this bill. I think I will conclude my comments and remarks by saying that at this point in time I appreciate the opportunity to add my comments to this. I would say that definitely we as the opposition support this bill.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I recall a day in this very House when you were actually over here in these benches, and you actually enjoyed getting up to speak to a bill very similar to this, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, because of course we know how important this act is. So important. So important. Of course, it cleans up various aspects of different pieces of legislation. I believe that you even called it one time a housecleaning bill, if I'm not mistaken.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Housekeeping.

Member Loyola: Housekeeping. Yes. Housekeeping bill. That's what it was.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I guess his house is not that clean.

Member Loyola: Well, of course, this is why, you know, I enjoy actually speaking to this bill because it gives us an opportunity to perhaps be a little bit more jovial.

But of course we take this job seriously because these are, in fact, important changes that need to be made to these pieces of legislation. They're so important, but, in fact, they are technically housekeeping changes. It's important that we be able to agree on them and, hopefully, move on this particular bill by consensus. The truth is that we were very happy that the government decided to bring these to us ahead of time so that we could discuss them and we could actually take a look at what was being presented by the government in terms of the statutes that they wanted to amend and therefore change.

However, in that process – and I just want to say that this is a perfect example of how it is possible for both sides of the House to actually work together. I know that they're just small changes, but of course, you know, one can only have hope, Mr. Speaker. One can only have hope that we can actually work together in this House in terms of bringing legislation forward. Because we were doing this, we actually brought to the government's attention that there was something that we did not agree with, of course, and the government so graciously decided to actually remove that particular piece which was in contention. See? There you go again, us working together. Working together.

From the fact that we were able to work together and actually agree on what was being brought forward in this particular piece of legislation, therefore we really have no issues with the bill as it's presented. Of course, we are in full agreement. The majority of these changes are in relation to forms and moving the forms from legislation to regulation. In cases where there is no prescription for forms, the content will still be regulated by the minister or the director. Other changes are as a result of changes being made to the legislation through other bills at both the provincial and federal

levels. It also brings the LAO and the independent officers under the Public Service Act.

As I was stating, you know, it was great to have these ahead of time so that we could take a look at them, could agree on them, and anything that was contentious was actually graciously agreed to by the government to be taken out so that we could pass this particular bill with relative ease within the House.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I recall those days in this House when I was actually on the government side and you would bring great joy to the House with your very gracious attitude and jovial juxtaposition or position. It was an honour to be able to sit in the House with you at that time and have a little bit of fun. For me, I try to mimic exactly that when I get up in the House. I try to bring a little bit more fun into the House, make it a little bit more light perhaps. We get into some pretty strong debates in here, and, of course, from time to time we need to remember that we're all human beings, that we're all in it to do good for the people of Alberta, of course. Although we may not agree on how to do that specifically, it's important that we recognize that and, I would even go so far as to say, that we respect the perspectives from the other side of the House and try to do that as much as we possibly can although we don't necessarily agree.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on this particular piece of legislation.

The Speaker: I feel like maybe we were in a bit of a *Seinfeld* episode there for a moment.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone else has a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, it appears to me like the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall would like to join in the second reading debate.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise after midnight and speak to this bill, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. As my colleague mentioned, it's mostly housekeeping items, cleanup of various pieces of legislation. It amends or makes changes to a number of pieces of legislation, I think more than 12, 15. But I won't blame the government that it's an omnibus bill or anything because a miscellaneous statutes act usually contains changes to many pieces of legislation.

12:20

I think I'm glad that the government did share a copy of this legislation with us so that we were able to go through the various changes that were proposed. There was a certain change that we requested, that it be removed, and that was removed as well. I think it's a piece of legislation that we can support the government on, and although it makes changes to a number of very important pieces of legislation, the changes are really minor ones.

For instance, it makes changes to the Interpretation Act. The Interpretation Act, Mr. Speaker, is an important piece of legislation, and it has a bearing on pretty much every other piece of legislation. From my legal training and background I can share that whenever some term is not defined in some piece of legislation, then we go to the Interpretation Act, and then we use that definition for consistency's sake. So the Interpretation Act is certainly an important piece of legislation. I understand that the change that the government is making to the Interpretation Act will keep the Interpretation Act intact, and it's a minor change.

Similarly, this legislation is also making changes to the Petty Trespass Act. We have heard many times in this House – and there was a private member's bill as well – how important it is to make sure that people don't trespass on private properties, other people's properties. Again, another important piece of legislation. The

changes that the government is making to this piece of legislation are, again, minor ones, and as such we do not have any objection to that.

Then the legislation also makes changes to the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, another important piece of legislation. As such, the changes the government proposed in this piece of legislation will have no bearing on community safety, will not adversely impact anything. Although we don't want to go there, there are other changes that may impact community safety and neighbourhood safety, but at least the changes that are within this Bill 34 are minor and such that we can support those changes.

Then the bill also proposes certain changes to the Family Law Act, another very important piece of legislation that deals with many different aspects of the family. Changes that are contained in this piece of legislation are, again, minor ones, just housekeeping items. They will not fundamentally change the Family Law Act, so we can support these changes, too.

The legislation is also making changes to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act. The Provincial Offences Procedure Act is also a very important piece of legislation that deals with the procedures of how provincial offences are dealt with, and the change contained in this piece of legislation, Bill 34, will not alter that procedure significantly. Again, this is a change that we can stand behind and that we can support as well.

Then it makes changes to the Jury Act, another important piece of legislation. Oftentimes in criminal trials the jury plays a very important role, selected from the members of the public, and makes decisions that are important that may have implications for the life, liberty, and security of persons. But the changes that are contained and proposed in Bill 34 are not, as such, significant. They are merely housekeeping items and the kinds of changes that would be included in a miscellaneous statutes act. Therefore, we have reviewed those changes, and we don't see anything there that is objectionable. That's why we are supporting these changes.

Then there are changes proposed to the Public Service Act and, I think, our public service, again an important piece of legislation. The public service is important and delivers many services that Albertans need and rely on. There is, Mr. Speaker, at least one change where this change will bring, it's my understanding, LAO staff under the public service. So on a more serious note, some clarification is needed on how this will be perceived to impact the independence of the LAO and offices of the Legislative Assembly. I think that likely there will be other opportunities for members of this community and different forums on how this change will play out, but there is that question or concern, I believe, and if the government wants to address that, then that would be helpful.

Then there are some other pieces of legislation that I can go through and outline how changes are made to these important pieces of legislation, but in general, other than that change in the Public Service Act, I think these are changes that are of a housekeeping nature, that are not changing the pieces of legislation in any significant manner, and I believe that I will have to say that I will support this government piece of legislation.

With that, I think I'll move to adjourn the House until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The Speaker: A motion to adjourn is always in order. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has moved to adjourn debate, because that would be the first step in this process.

Mr. Sabir: Yes. I move to adjourn the debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) I would like to notify the House that there will be no morning sitting tomorrow morning.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:30 a.m. on Tuesday]

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