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The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, April 6, 2021

Day 92

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.

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 56

Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021

[Adjourned debate March 15: Mr. McIver]

The Deputy Speaker: I may be looking for the Official Opposition to respond to the moving of second reading for Bill 56, the Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Sorry. I saw my colleague jump up, and I thought he was going to be speaking to this, but it's my pleasure to be speaking to this and for a number of reasons. I, of course, know that when this was introduced, the interim Minister of Municipal Affairs talked about the two parts of this bill, the two parts which deal with the Emergency 911 Act and the second part that deals with the MSI, that this government is pushing out and continuing to operate for another three years. And then talking about the legislation of the local government fiscal framework, which this government promised they would bring in already, that's not happening, obviously, because this government has put itself in a hole, Madam Speaker. They have squandered money on various things that have left themselves short to deal with municipalities in this province.

When I say squandered – I think later tonight we're going to be talking about KXL, that \$1.5 billion that we know has been squandered. Albertans are out on a bad bet, a bad deal to incentivize or take an equity share in the KXL pipeline that was never going to happen, Madam Speaker. Of course, who's paying the price for all of that? It looks like municipalities are paying the price for all of that around the province. We know that municipalities have been severely, negatively affected by this government, by the number of decisions this government has made that have left municipalities aside, that have left off contributing to municipalities. Municipalities can't do the same things the government, the province of Alberta can do. They can't take down debt because they are prohibited from doing that. So what do they depend on? They depend on grants and funds from the provincial government, the federal government, and they leverage those up with their own taxpayers' monies.

We know municipalities, as a result of the decisions this government has made to squander money repeatedly on different initiatives – I've just mentioned KXL, but we know that there are significant other ones. You know, the collection of taxes, lowering the tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent: Madam Speaker, you don't do that and figure you're going to get the same tax draw from those businesses. What's happened with that money? It's squandered because it's gone into the pockets of shareholders, it's gone into the dividends of shareholders, and we haven't got anything back in this province as a result of that. There's no creation of jobs. Speaking of jobs, you know, the entities out there that can create jobs, maintain jobs are municipalities, and they're being negatively affected. They're being gutted by this UCP government, and this government is finding every conceivable method, way to increase costs on Albertans through their municipalities.

I said that municipalities can't go into debt, so they have limited choices on what they can do. They can cut back their services, which no one likes, no one wants. You know, ratepayers, taxpayers only want to see their services go one way, and that's to increase and that there be more services and more value for the money that they pay in taxes, but this government is putting them in a pretty difficult situation.

The other thing this UCP government is doing is, as I said, increasing costs onto local Albertans through their municipalities by things like increasing provincial park fees, deindexing the income tax system, meaning all of us will pay more. When we were government, we indexed that system so that if a person had an inflationary increase in their wages, they didn't pay more taxes to us because we increased the tax bracket threshold for them, but this government is not doing that. In terms of property taxes those are likely going up, and now there's a new 10 per cent charge that municipalities will have to pay for disaster events. I wonder how that will be apportioned, Madam Speaker. I know one mayor up in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo says that it's abhorrent that this government is doing that because his area has been hit hard by disasters of late, so they're going to have to be ponying up all those monies to meet their 10 per cent increase that's going to happen.

Madam Speaker, there are two parts of this bill, of course, Bill 56. I mentioned the 911 act and the MSI. The MSI cuts and reductions to that funding from the provincial government are massive. They are averaging out at around \$700 million over three years, \$750 million, I think, if you add that up and divide by three, where previously the UCP government agreed to a much higher amount to municipalities for their infrastructure builds, for ensuring that they create the kind of quality living experiences in their municipalities that residents want. The reductions to MSI are significant. They will be felt for a long time in municipalities, and municipalities will not be able to address the needs of their local constituents as a result of this.

Madam Speaker, when we were government, we front-ended, just like is proposed here, the funding for MSI. We had the highest amount of MSI funding ever at that time. Of course, it's gone up in subsequent years, but, you know, this UCP government is finding a way to reduce that drastically. AUMA calls it a 36 per cent reduction to MSI if you look at the last 10 years of that program, and the amount of money these three years indicates there is a 36 per cent reduction to MSI, which gets felt in municipalities. Municipalities can't build as much as they want to, and what do we need now more than ever? We need people to get back to work. We need people to be working on creating the kind of infrastructure this province needs on roads, on sewers, on other water initiatives throughout the province, on the LRT, the green line in Calgary. We need all of that. It'll put people back to work. It'll cause companies to get jobs as a result of that investment that municipalities leverage up.

None of that or not as much of that will happen now. This government has only done one thing with regard to jobs in this province, and that is to not add to them. They've not found any way to diversify the economy, to add to jobs, to make sure that Albertans who have been unemployed for a good long time, as a result of COVID, get back to work as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, I'm disappointed in this bill. I don't think AUMA, RMA, the municipalities that speak through their organizations wanted this to happen, understand why this is happening, especially when there is, as I said, money being squandered by the UCP government on KXL, on a \$30 million a year war room times four, on an anti-Albertan investigation that is spending millions and that nobody wants in this province.

[The Speaker in the chair]

These are the things that, had they been directed to infrastructure development through the MSI program or even through the 911 service program – you know, there are alternatives that this government had with regard to 911. It didn't have to pass it on at this point in time to 911 users. It could have helped municipalities that have to pay a portion of this \$41 million that's going to be going to upgrade 911 throughout the province. It didn't have to pass all of that on this year. It could have assisted municipalities with some of that payment for this year, for next year perhaps, and then feathered that in or seen that come into municipalities in the third year.

7:40

But there was no creativity at all, Mr. Speaker, with regard to Bill 56. There is just: we want to reduce your MSI, and we're going to promise one day – one day – to give you the local government fiscal framework that was in legislation and is now being changed. The date is being changed. There was no creativity. The way this bill was brought forward was talked about with municipalities, all there was was: this is what you have to pay, this is what we're putting in legislation, and this is what you'll have to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed. I know my colleagues will get up and share similar kinds of stories and disappointment they have with regard to Bill 56. It comes at a time, especially for rural municipalities in Alberta, where the amount of unpaid property taxes that they're experiencing from oil and gas companies is now estimated at a staggering \$245 million, which is a significant increase from 2019, when they were looking at just over a hundred million dollars at that point in time. You know, it means that the viability of municipalities in this province – and the UCP is adding to it with the reduction of MSI and the passing on of costs right away to 911 services to revise that program. It means that the UCP is adding to that challenging situation for municipalities, where some of them need to look at whether they can continue to be viable into the future.

You know, they have a long history, a proud history of meeting the needs of their constituents. They're a legitimate level of government and not, as some people see them as – well, they are a creation of the province, but they're just as critical to their local constituents as other orders of government. They're not a junior order of government, Mr. Speaker. They're a legitimate order of government.

I think that in many cases, when I hear members from the opposite side talk about municipal governments, they believe that they're less capable, they're junior to us around this table or the federal government. What they are is – they're just as legitimate. I spent 15 years at a council table. Others here spent time around their council tables. You know, we did a lot of head scratching about just what the provincial government was up to at times and whether they were on the side of municipalities or if, in fact, they were calling their own plays that did not look into the needs of municipalities.

I think Bill 56 is wanting on a number of levels. I've talked about the surprise, the 911 service increases that'll be put on all 911 users as well as municipalities. There are, of course, important upgrades coming. But I think there was an opportunity to be more creative in the levying of the timing onto municipalities for their costs. This government could have helped with all of that and didn't, and that's not helpful for municipalities certainly at this time.

The other thing, of course, is the reductions to MSI because this government has left itself with a significant financial problem and is, essentially, downloading onto municipalities. That hurt is something that municipalities don't have the same legislative tools. They don't have the same financial tools as the provincial government to pick up, so what they do – and I just want to underline what they do – is that they look to their services that

they're providing and they cut those, which means cutting staff, which means leaving constituents not pleased with the level of service often, and it means that there are more people in Alberta, then, looking to get support for not having work and not being employed.

The cuts are pretty drastic to the MSI program, and it pushes out any funding sharing program in legislation beyond the next election for the local government fiscal framework. If you recall, Mr. Speaker, for the two large cities we put that framework, that legislation, in place. It was called the big-city charters, and it would have kicked in, certainly, during this time here, but it was scrapped by the UCP government.

I will, I think, Mr. Speaker, take my seat but recognize that at some point I'll have some amendments to make with regard to the second reading. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before us this evening is Bill 56, Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021. Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand here today and speak on behalf of Bill 56, the Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021. I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Transportation for the great work he has done on this bill. As a former three-term councillor for Spruce Grove I know how important a sustainable capital funding model is for municipalities, and this bill supports that objective. Bill 56, the local measures act, amends the Local Government Fiscal Framework Act and modernizes Alberta's 911 technology.

This bill aligns the local government fiscal framework and the municipal sustainability initiative with our recently passed budget of 2021. These changes ensure that the municipal sustainability initiative, also known as MSI, funding is extended to 2023 and 2024. This will not only give municipalities certainty on the capital funding they will receive, but it will also ensure that this funding remains front-loaded and flexible. This bill will require that the MSI funding be transitioned over to the local government fiscal framework, or LGFF, in 2024 or 2025. Now, when that occurs, there will be a baseline funding of \$722 million, which will rise or fall based on provincial revenues, and that is an important point to stress, Mr. Speaker.

Alberta's economy has been hammered for the past six or seven years. With the low oil price, the province's finances have struggled well before the pandemic, and reckless spending by the former government made matters worse while driving away important investment. It is during these tough times that all levels of government must do their best to live within their means. Our government has worked hard to reduce unnecessary spending and become more efficient in delivering programs. As MLAs we have taken a 5 per cent pay cut, and the Premier took a 10 per cent pay cut. We must all do our part in these trying times, and that includes our capital spending.

Now, there has been a lot of capital spending this past year, including half a billion provided to municipalities under the municipal stimulus program of 2020-2021. This spending is part of Alberta's recovery plan and has been a good source of economic stimulus and job creation during this pandemic. MSI spending will increase in 2021-2022 to \$1.196 billion, and then in 2022-23 and '23-24 this spending will be at \$485 million.

Now, another major part of this bill is the modernization of Alberta's 911 system. Alberta's 911 system has not had an actual update in nearly 30 years. Thirty years. Now, this may make me sound old, but a lot has changed in the last 30 years, especially

technology. Just look at any video game from the early '90s or how clunky computers were during that time. For the gamers here, they can remember Wolfenstein and Super Mario Bros. 1 or Duck Hunt compared to the games of today. And just to really make sure that they feel old, this August will be the 30-year anniversary of a thing called the World Wide Web, Mr. Speaker. Think about that. What I'm trying to say is that the 911 system needs a major update, and I'm glad to see that this legislation will actually make it happen.

The federal government, through the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, has mandated that Canada's 911 system be upgraded to next generation 911 technology by March 30, 2024. This upgrade will allow first responders to locate people faster and allow Albertans to communicate with a 911 dispatcher beyond just phone calls. This is going to benefit not just residents of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, Mr. Speaker, but residents all over the province.

7:50

Albertans will also be able to text 911 once these upgrades are completed. Again, a massive new change with technology that will benefit Albertans. I'm sure that there have been many situations in which a victim was unable to call 911 for help, but they could have sent a discreet text instead. This change will help victims of domestic violence and people witnessing a crime to be able to discreetly text instead of calling, which could put their lives in danger. It is my hope that this change will make it easier for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence to contact 911 and get the help that they need.

Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify something to the House. The technology upgrades in this bill will only affect the 911 emergency dispatch callers and will not affect EMS, policing, firefighters, or anything else related to first responders. These upgrades will improve 911 services regardless of who answers the phone.

The costs for these updates are minimal and less than other provinces such as Saskatchewan. If passed, phone bills will see an increase of the 911 levy by 51 cents more per month, up from 44 cents, effective September 1, 2021. A small price to pay for increased safety. This minimal increase is necessary for the increased safety that these upgrades will bring. Next generation 911 will improve location accuracy, which will help locate callers in rural and remote areas and will even be able to determine the height of a call. For example, next generation 911 will be able to locate where someone is within a tall building in downtown Edmonton or Calgary. This is phenomenal technology, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 56 is an important piece of legislation for municipalities and our 911 system, and I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Seeing none, I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was catching my eye.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 56 for a few moments. It is concerning me a lot, as I watch the actions of this government with regard to its relationship with municipalities, to see that this government is really continuing to undermine the well-being of municipalities and to undermine the ability of municipal councillors to be the individuals who make determinations with regard to issues in the municipalities. I think that there's some deep concern about that.

It is, of course, true that the municipalities are a child of the provincial government and that the legislation as it stands does

allow the provincial government to step in and to make some changes in terms of municipal government rules and regulations. But it also is important to recognize that municipalities were formed for a reason and not simply to offload work from the provincial government. It wasn't a matter of: we've got too much to do, so let's find somebody else to do it. Rather, it was a decision to create municipalities based on the idea that good governance requires different levels of government that are focused on different aspects of the well-being of the citizens of the province of Alberta and that a local government is best when issues matter in a contextualized, local geographic context.

Not all issues are equally the same in terms of their importance throughout the province of Alberta. In some big cities, for example, there are major issues that need to be handled such as the transportation of literally millions of people every day, which calls upon the municipal government to be more focused on things such as public transportation, issues that are much less likely in some of the smaller towns that have perhaps fewer than 20,000 or 30,000 people. Many have much fewer than that, even a few thousand people, who would not be interested in issues such as public transportation, LRTs, and so on. So it's good to have a level of government that is flexible in that way, that deals with the issues that are important for the local community and is not always worried about the issues of the larger communities.

But here we have, yet again, this provincial government making decisions that are dramatically cutting into the ability of the local government to make determinations as to not only what kind of services and issues are necessary in their local community but how they will go about organizing those services and how they will go about funding those services.

It's very problematic when this government acts in such a way that it believes that only the provincial government has anything of value to say to the citizens of the province of Alberta. It seems to be part of a strange mindset on the government's side that in spite of the fact that we do elect people on multiple levels, they believe they're the only ones that have a mandate from the people in this province, which I think is very problematic. Bill 56 is an extension of that same kind of thinking. Again, it's another situation where we find ourselves concerned that the municipalities are being hurt by the types of decisions that are being made by this provincial government. Not only is there interference but that interference is negative in its ultimate outcome for the municipalities.

We've seen that, of course, with other areas such as the decision to provide more police officers but then not provide extra funding, therefore causing dramatic increases in costs to many municipalities around this province, who certainly were hoping to receive some more funding for RCMP, for example, but couldn't do it on their own, and then suddenly had the provincial government force that on them so that they had to rearrange their budgets to accommodate a provincial decision without support, without consideration by the provincial government about how that might affect other services that are being affected in the community.

I know that when the Leader of the Opposition, Rachel – sorry; I stopped myself – the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and myself went up to one of our tours in northern Alberta and were in High Prairie, we had a chance to meet with the local municipality. They were greatly concerned about these kinds of decisions and told us about the significant increases in taxation that they were being pushed toward because they simply couldn't reduce their services enough to accommodate the financial costs that had been imposed on them by the provincial government.

Of course, I've spoken to many other municipalities that have had similar kinds of concerns. In fact, it was just last spring that I stood out in front of this Legislature with mayors and reeves and

councillors from all across the province who had come to this Legislature to tell this provincial government that what you are doing to local municipalities is crushing them. Here we are again in Bill 56, in spite of the fact that they already have received protests from mayors and reeves and councillors – not exactly a crew that typically protests, but here they were at the Legislature protesting and being very concerned about what was going to happen in their communities, some of them telling me that they were going to have to increase their taxes in the neighbourhood of 200 per cent.

In the rural area around Medicine Hat they were telling me that was the likely projected change in their municipal tax rate because of the actions of this provincial government. That's an incredible burden on a small municipality. Of course, it makes the provincial government look like they're, you know, doing nice things, but they're simply, actually pushing the pain on to a different level of government while taking away the power from that same level of government. Very concerned about that.

8:00

Other areas, of course, that they've been attacking the municipalities on have been things such as the loss of linear assessment, where they are not receiving the income that they previously would have expected and therefore are unable to plan for the future. A pileup on top of that is the fact that they have actually provided a tax holiday for many large companies to not pay their property tax, which is really the only basis or the primary basis on which municipalities are able to fund their services. While you're increasing costs on the one hand for things such as policing, you're now decreasing their ability to pay for the services in multiple kinds of ways, and I think that this is very problematic.

We've also, of course, seen this government introduce legislation to impose provincial electoral issues on municipal elections, thereby interfering with their ability to speak to their own citizens without interference, without that background static of another issue going on, again undermining the value of having conversations between the municipal level of government officials and the people who elect them in such a way that they cannot properly serve the members of that community, a big problem.

Of course, we've also seen the significant war on doctors that has occurred in this province and the fact that many rural doctors are saying that they can no longer practise in their area because of the behaviour of this provincial government. I can tell you that anybody who has spent any time in rural areas will tell you how hard it is to attract and retain doctors in rural areas. They work very hard. They often invest significant amounts of money and certainly invest significant amounts of time to try to create opportunities to attract doctors and to ensure that doctors feel welcome and supported in their communities. Here in one year this government has done more to eliminate those hard-fought-for relationships built up with doctors over the years.

The concern here is about the provincial government yet again going after the municipal governments and making the lives of municipal governments more difficult and therefore making the lives of citizens in rural and smaller communities more difficult. I think that that's very problematic.

In this particular case, of course, what we see happening is that there is a significant decrease in the MSI that has been made available to the municipalities. Now, it is designed in such a way as to upload some of the money at the beginning so that the municipalities can use that money to adapt, but it drops off immediately in the second year, dramatically, in fact, in the second year. As a result, what we have is that we have municipalities that over the next three years will essentially lose about \$750 million in funding that was available to them prior to this act coming in. The

upfront load-up on MSI dollars is about \$1.2 billion but immediately drops down to less than \$500 million.

We know that, you know, this year it may not hurt as much, but it certainly will dramatically hurt municipalities in the next year. Of course, that will be felt by members in the community in terms of loss of services, the way these things work out, probably in about two years down the road, which is interesting because it conveniently puts the worst impact of this just beyond the next election. There's clearly some devilry in the details here that the provincial government has enacted in order to not only smack down the municipalities but to ensure that they don't pay the price, because we know that they won't be the government in two years' time. I guess I'm very concerned about this.

I'm concerned that the viability of many smaller communities is at risk here, that governments will simply have to make the decision in some places, in smaller communities in the province of Alberta to fold their tents and go home and to simply pass on the excessive expectations and the low ability to meet those expectations to some other level of government, some other place in hopes that somebody else will be able to deal with it, which is a shame.

It does mean, of course, that in this democracy people will be less represented than they were prior to this particular UCP government taking its place in this House, so I'm very concerned about the trend. I'm very concerned about the implications for democracy in terms of this government's overreach into municipal issues and interference with the municipalities being able to do the best job possible for members of this community.

I know that there is a second part to this bill, which is, of course, the 911 tax increase, which is, you know, a reasonably significant increase over the next little while. In order to fund this 911 system . . .

An Hon. Member: Nine-one-one.

Mr. Feehan: Sorry; 911. Don't say 9/11. I get it.

They're increasing the monthly cellphone bill tax by 51 cents. So it's going from 44 cents to 95 cents, which is significant, a more than 100 per cent increase. That, of course, means that everybody will see an increase on their individual cellphone bill. You know, I don't necessarily disagree with that. I understand we do have to finance important things like 911, and as the previous speaker, from Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, indicated, having a really effective 911 system is important to the well-being of citizens. There are many situations in which we want everybody to have a high level of access and be able to receive services. But if you have a high level of access and those services are not there because the municipalities can't afford the level of services, then it's a contradictory thought process. If you say that we want to increase access to something, but we're going to decrease the something itself, then it just doesn't make sense. There's no consistency of thought in terms of the bill. And here we have a bill where, in fact, those two very same things are happening.

Of course, it's also a bit contradictory to the overall mantra of the government side of the House, who say that they're going to decrease taxes when, in fact, they constantly find ways to increase them.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-East has risen.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this wonderful opportunity today and allowing me to speak here on this important topic,

ensuring changes that will help modernize and align the local measures act with the new 2021 budget. Bill 56, the local measures act, aims to align changes to the local government fiscal framework, LGFF, and the municipal sustainability initiative, MSI, with Budget 2021. It also will aim to modernize Alberta's 911 technology through important amendments to the Emergency 911 Act.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Minister of Municipal Affairs for taking the initiative and important measures to ensure the protections of Albertans are improved and to ensure that the MSI and LGFF align with Budget 2021. And I would like to extend my appreciation to all Albertans and key stakeholders for listening to the numerous concerns around issues with violent crime and serious challenges that are faced by our vulnerable population.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 56 is proposing a number of changes to the local measures act that would assure Albertans that our local municipalities feel supported and respected. The LGFF will be implemented in 2024-2025, with predictable, stable, and legislated baseline funding of \$722 million, which will rise or fall based on provincial revenues. The local measures act will support Budget 2021 by extending MSI funding to 2023-2024 to provide front-loaded and flexible capital funding for municipalities. MSI funding is condensed over the next three years to an average \$722 million per year as Alberta is ensuring that we live within our means as we face the unprecedented challenges with COVID-19.

8:10

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government provided \$500 million to municipalities under the municipal stimulus program in 2020-2021 as part of Alberta's recovery plan, much of which will be spent in 2021. The aim is to have a future balanced budget with an assurance of creating jobs and more businesses in the province. If we continue to follow the path to pursue financial stability with our system, then this will definitely help the province and all Albertans. Let me be a reminder that, again, our government's platform made a promise to make life better for all Albertans.

Domestic violence rates increase during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Alberta's government provided an additional \$6.1 million to shelters across the province, ensuring supports continue to be safe and accessible. Alberta already has one of the strongest legislations to protect and ensure all Albertans feel protected against crime. Just this year, under the Vital Statistics Act, legislation was made in an effort to ensure that criminals do not have the opportunity to change their names, and just last year Alberta's version of Clare's law was introduced to allow vulnerable Albertans who may be at risk of domestic violence to access relevant information about their partner. This legislation, with the changes to the Emergency 911 Act, will increase the reliability of the service being provided by first responders.

Mr. Speaker, under Bill 56 we are committed to protect vulnerable Albertans through modernization of legislation like the Emergency 911 Act, that will increase the protection and safety of Albertans who are faced with actual emergency situations. It is finally the time to take action to make the right opportunity to propose amendments to modernize the Emergency 911 Act, which has been neglected for many, many years. These changes will modernize and update the 911 system for the first time in nearly 30 years to ensure Albertans continue to have safe, reliable services when they call or text 911 during emergency situations.

Once the system upgrades are complete, Albertans will be able to text 911 in situations where they cannot call, which is particularly important and crucial for victims of domestic abuse. First responders will be able to locate people faster. To cover the cost of the changes, phone bills will see an increase in the 911 levy of 51 cents per month, up from 44 cents, effective September 1, 2021.

Many of us already know that customers may raise concerns about an increase to cellphone bills, but Albertans should understand the importance of maintaining the Alberta 911 system, which will support many Albertans facing challenging situations.

Mr. Speaker, there is a significant risk that Alberta's 911 system will not be able to transition to NG911 without additional funding, and also the government recognized that. Alberta is experiencing a significant economic downturn from the challenges of the pandemic. It is great to know that there will be no direct provincial financial implications for the government to implement these new changes to the Emergency 911 Act.

Mr. Speaker, these technology upgrades will have nothing to do with EMS, policing, firefighters, or professions that are related to first responders. It will simply be for the 911 emergency service system and to help first responders and Albertans with efficacy. These changes will allow the reduction of barriers and will improve efficiency and will support callers and Albertans to utilize better services that will work regardless of who answers the phone. The federal government, through the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, recommended that Canada's 911 system be upgraded to next-generation 911, NG911, technology by March 30, 2024.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to work with other provinces and territories so that the implementation of similar legislation or orders be made, ensuring that the same goal and purpose would be as well attained. It explains that this will be a step to a better direction, and it will be more effective as part of our pan-Canadian approach. This is in line with other provinces and is crucial to cover the cost of the system upgrades. For example, Saskatchewan has announced their levy will be \$1.88 per month due to differences in provincial systems, and there has been minimal public push-back to a recent 911 levy increase in New Brunswick.

The next-generation 911 will improve location correctness of calls to verify a caller's civic address or device location, helping locate callers in rural and remote areas, and to determine the height of a call. If, for example, someone is in a tall building in an urban area, the pin drop will not be required via text because the location will be provided automatically as long as the caller has some phone reception to process the call, which is done through satellite GPS. Next-generation 911 will leverage the growth of broadband in areas underserved by cellphone coverage to make 911 calling much easier even in areas with poor cellphone coverage or for individuals that are in areas where it has broadband Wi-Fi coverage. Then the call will be processed through the network under the modernized system NG911. Again, the 911 system will work better unified, and it will be faster with the modern equipment introduced.

Mr. Speaker, our communities and Albertans have waited far too long for the previous government to act. It is finally time to amend and legislate laws that will help Albertans get the support and assistance they deserve. These additions will help communities and individuals cope with the trauma and help further strengthen the promotion of public safety. The constituents of Calgary-East have been eager to see these changes that will ensure and enhance the public safety in our province. They have been on careful watch of the security of their communities as criminals' activities happen when nobody is observing. With these changes the safety of everyone is strengthened.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 56 will further strengthen our commitments to help ensure that our vulnerable Albertans that are faced with violent crimes are being protected and have access to reliable and efficient services. The changes in this bill are another step to ensure that the government is taking actions to help protect families and support Albertans. The utmost duty of our government is to protect citizens

and strengthen the public safety of all Albertans. It is unfair to the victims of violence to be living in a province that will not have a modernized system to ensure they feel safe.

Mr. Speaker, we must do everything we can to protect the children and vulnerable Albertans. That is why it is important for this bill to pass. They have many groups and stakeholders who have voiced their support on this bill. The government will never stop finding solutions and communicating information that is vital for the resolution of the current situation. I know that this will receive positive remarks from other governments, who will likely adopt these changes as we try to work harmoniously together.

Mr. Speaker, I again encourage everyone in this Chamber to support this bill and support all individuals that are dealing with the challenges and the families that are affected. Again I applaud the minister and all the staff and team members that have been involved in the crafting of these proposed changes that will ensure the protection of Albertans and will ensure that our vulnerable populations are supported and services and technology are continuously being upgraded to meet the demands of our modern-day world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8:20

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to ask a brief question or comment.

Member Ceci: Yeah. Thank you very much. Just with regard – listening to the Member for Calgary-East, he spent precious little time talking about, you know, the loss to municipalities of hundreds of millions of dollars of infrastructure money that they would invest in their municipalities across the province to put people to work, to increase the economy in those regions and in our cities. Mr. Speaker, I don't think that there is support from RMA and AUMA with regard to the significant decrease in funding that they'll be getting as a result of this bill becoming law, to \$722 million in 2024-2025. That's when the local government fiscal framework will kick in with this bill.

What the Member for Calgary-East forgot or didn't mention was that the escalator clause is reduced by half, through the negotiations, from a dollar for dollar. If the province would earn a dollar in terms of where it sees itself collecting on the various taxes and other things, municipalities will only get 50 per cent of that as an escalator where previously they would have got dollar per dollar, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I was there when the first MSI was formed with the two mayors, Mayor Bronconnier and Mayor Mandel, working with Premier Stelmach at the time. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that this was a significant program that helped our municipalities all the way across the province put in needed infrastructure and address the growing population in this province, setting us up for a province that grew the most in terms of GDP for several years running. Now, we're in a challenging time, there's no doubt. But why are municipalities being forced to pay for that? I know the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain talked about this earlier. He was around the council table, too, and he can probably tell you how important MSI monies were to his community when he was a councillor there. They were significant for the community that I represented.

This characterization that this is an important bill that all municipalities, rural municipalities will support – I look at their newsletters all the time, and I've not seen any great outpouring of support. What I've seen is a concern, Mr. Speaker, that their legislated agreement on the LGFF was pushed out. I see a concern that they're getting a reduction – they say 36 per cent – over the 10-

year period of this program, the 10-year average of this program. You can't reduce your program that much and not have a knock-on effect to your taxpayers, either through the reduction of services provided by municipalities, the reduction of staff in your communities, or an increase in taxes. Both of those things are happening, unfortunately, in our province as a result of the actions of this government. The Member for Calgary-East perhaps would like to address how he thinks municipalities feel about that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East or others.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to join the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's one taxpayer: we hear this a lot in this place, and I know where it comes from. It comes from that concept that if you download costs onto others, it's the same people who are going to pay for it, whether they're paying for it through open, transparent increases provincially or whether they're paying for it through downloaded costs onto municipalities.

When the provincial government makes choices to cut revenues that were available from large profitable corporations making over \$500,000 a year in profits, not their gross but their net profits, and then says to municipal partners, other forms of government, other orders of government, "We can't afford to honour our commitments that we made to you because we made a promise to large corporations that is more important than our promise to our partners and municipalities," these are the direct consequences. This government has chosen to put large profitable corporations ahead of municipal partners.

When I look back to just two years ago, during the election period, there were very clear promises made to municipalities that MSI would be maintained, that the big-city charter – it may have had a different name at that point – that charter that was struck between Edmonton, Calgary, and the province, would be intact. The current Premier as well as the former Premier made that commitment. The current Premier broke his word. He's downloading costs onto municipalities, and this bill is an example of how that will be carried out during this term of this government. Again, big promises made, big promises broken. It's about choices, it's about priorities, and it's about choosing to put municipalities and those who live in municipalities, which is all of us, on the bottom of the priority list.

When the government chooses to invest at least \$1.3 billion on a bet that Donald Trump will be re-elected President of the United States and then says to municipalities, "Sorry; there's no money left to pay for your rec centre or your library or your roads or the potholes" – it's funny, because when I door-knock as a provincial politician, sometimes people will raise municipal issues with me. They will say things like, "Yeah, about garbage pickup" and "Yeah, about the potholes" and "Yeah, you know, the curb is not very even over here, and water pools in front of my house." I usually say, "I'm really happy to raise those concerns with your municipally elected official; that's a municipal responsibility."

But the exact money that goes towards funding those things: this government has made the intentional choice to chip away at, to erode the foundation that municipalities have. You bet when I'm door-knocking in my own riding and possibly in others and people start raising those municipal issues, there is absolutely a direct link now between the municipal issues that they'll be raising about their road maintenance, their road infrastructure and this provincial government because this provincial government chose to break a promise to municipalities, which in turn is a promise to all voters because that one order of government asked for that commitment

from this order of government. The promise was made just over two years ago in the election campaign, and very quickly thereafter it was broken. This is one example of how this government has chosen to download additional costs onto municipalities.

There also was this one. Most Albertans absolutely would shake their head at this one. When the government gives grants in place of taxes, grants in lieu of taxes, GIPOT, I think, as it's usually referred to, and chose to cut those grants, the government chose to cut how much taxes they pay to other municipalities. That was another big disrespectful move on the part of the government. Imagine thinking: well, we just really can't afford to pay our taxes this year to municipalities, so we'll cut the amount of money we give to them in paying our own taxes as well, doing it through large, substantial grants like this that support infrastructure, that support our municipalities being forward thinking, being able to build.

Obviously, when we've talked about countercyclical financing and the importance of having good, rent-paying – I won't even say mortgage-paying but rent-paying – jobs in this economy, for the government to decide that it's not becoming for them to keep their partnerships, to keep their promises to municipalities around infrastructure, that has not only a direct impact on the municipality itself, on the ratepayers themselves, the homeowner who's paying those municipal taxes but also on the people who were relying on those jobs in our municipalities across our province to help pay their rent.

Let's pivot for a moment to 911 services. This is one of those little sneaky ones that just, like, found its way into this bill and is going to jack up fees for everyone's cellphone. Everyone's cellphone. Some households – there was a study recently; I think it's over 88 per cent of households in Canada. Yeah. CRTC: 88 per cent of Canadian households say that they have a cellphone. I know, Mr. Speaker, that probably your house is like many houses in my riding. I don't know this for sure, but I'm guessing that households that have more than one person often have more than one cellphone, especially as younger people grow up. I have a niece who's saving up money, and I said, "What are you saving for?" She said, "Either university or a cellphone; I haven't decided which one yet." These are important tools for communication in their lives and tools to keep themselves connected to their friends and their family but also to keep them safe.

So for the government to increase through yet another broken promise – no increases to taxes but bringing in a tax increase for cellphone service to be able to contact 911 through this bill, downloading those additional costs onto families. Definitely not the title of this bill; it's not a Bill to Increase Taxes for Working Families. That's definitely not what it's called, but that is definitely one of the implications of this bill given that there is this sneaky addition of a tax for being able to access 911 from your cellphone.

8:30

Being able to access 911 should not be a luxury, something that is taxed in this province. It is something that we from a very young age teach children about, the importance of that lifeline being there if they're in an unsafe situation, if they're in a crisis, that there is somebody on the other end of 911 who's there to help them. To tax that, Mr. Speaker, I think is just the height of disconnection, feeling disconnected from the actual voters. If you were to say to voters, "How do you feel about being able to access 911 from your cellphone? Should we put a tax on this?" – I would love to see that go out for public consultation. Put that on the ballot when it comes to municipal elections: how do you feel about the provincial government downloading more costs onto municipalities and onto you directly by increasing the amount that you have to pay by

adding a tax to your cellphone bill for you to be able to access 911 services? I highly doubt that that would be something that the public at large would support.

One of the things I love about second reading is that you have an opportunity to ask questions about the bill and, hopefully, some member of the government will get back to you, ideally in second reading or worst case scenario in Committee of the Whole. Actually, the worst case scenario is that they don't answer the questions at all. But let's try a few questions because I think it could potentially move this debate forward and get us to a better place. Has the government tallied up the total amount of funding that they've cut and downloaded onto municipal taxpayers and ratepayers already to date? Have they already kept track of how much it was before this bill? And have they tallied up how much it is as a direct result of this bill? I think that that would be an important piece of information for all members of this Assembly, because I don't recall anyone on the government side saying that they were running on increasing taxes for municipalities or that they were going to download that onto municipalities.

Has the government done analysis about what these higher property taxes mean to individual payers in their own ridings? Have they done an analysis of what the downloaded costs are going to mean for the one taxpayer that you're representing in this place? Have we done that analysis?

Has the government contemplated the impacts of taxing something as basic – which should be a right for all Albertans, to be able to access 911 services without having to be taxed for it. That is just, again, something that I don't think many people who thought they were voting for jobs and the economy and pipelines thought that they were going to see downloaded here. In fact, there were a lot of promises made about affordability and making life more affordable when, really, the opposite has happened. It's happened in these examples that I've highlighted today as well as with things like even camping for this upcoming summer season, which I hear is supposed to be the best summer ever. Well, it's going to be a more expensive summer; that's for sure. Definitely, a lot of families are missing folks from being part of their traditional summer experiences as a result of how this government has handled or mishandled the last two years and especially the last year.

When you look at this analysis that we have tried to begin presenting tonight when it comes to municipal rates and the impacts on property taxes and ratepayers in general who will have these costs downloaded onto them, I ask that the members of the government caucus consider the platform that they ran on and how this is a direct contravention of that and an absolute broken promise to the people that we were all sent here to represent.

We know that there have been other instances, that I've highlighted previously, around the government not keeping their own commitments around grants in place of taxes for provincial buildings to municipalities. That was already really terrible and I think a demonstration of a lack of respect for another order of government that exists, that we're supposed to be in a partnership with, that we're supposed to be working collaboratively with to support the citizens of, and definitely, as my colleague the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has highlighted, broad opposition from the organizations that represent municipalities with this erosion of this very foundational and fundamental funding to ensure that they can keep their commitments to our citizens that happen to live in municipalities.

I also want to take this moment – I believe that just in the last sort of hour the long-time mayor of the city of Calgary has announced his departure and stepping down from yet a fourth run for mayor, and I want to congratulate Mayor Nenshi on what I'm sure was a difficult decision. Three terms, 11 years because of the change in

the length of term one term in to his time as mayor. He's one of the people I think about when we're discussing these bills because I know how hard both he and Mayor Iveson work, who has also announced his departure from the mayor's race.

I think about the big-city charters, about the promises that were made specifically to Edmonton and Calgary and how this government has made big promises to the people of Calgary and has broken those promises time and time again. This is an example of funding directly to municipalities for infrastructure. Another huge example that we just saw in the release of the budget is no new schools in the city of Calgary for public or Catholic students. Not only is the government eroding funding for municipal infrastructure; they're also failing to commit funding to meet the needs for a provincial responsibility, that being education.

None in the city of Calgary for Calgary public or Calgary Catholic students: a real disappointment, I think, to many families who thought that the government would continue on a trajectory that they promised, which was to invest in education, to invest in health care, to invest in jobs, the economy, and pipelines, and objectively has failed on all fronts, has really failed on all fronts to deliver. For the residents of Calgary, definitely you're on my mind tonight and many nights as we consider the impacts of this government's decisions on your own family's budget as well as the resources you have available to one another.

Again, somebody earlier today said that this is going to be the best summer ever. At that same time, there are massive cuts to the grants that community associations rely on to provide programming and do basic maintenance to their facilities, including things like spray parks. Cutting CFEP and CIP grants to impact things like spray parks and basic infrastructure for municipalities. This is at a time when Alberta families are staying closer to home than they ever have, right? This last summer and probably this upcoming summer, a lot of people are making big plans to stay close to home.

I met a new neighbour last night and said, "What are your plans for the summer?" They're hoping to maybe house-sit for somebody who is going away, who has a few dogs – that'll be a lot of fun – and hoping to spend a lot of time at the park and the playground. I would like those experiences to be positive and robust, and I'd like to see our provincial government keep its word to families that they're not going to increase their fees, that they're not going to cut their services, that they're not going to hurt their municipalities' plans for infrastructure that supports the residents of those municipalities, of those communities.

This bill definitely is a move in the wrong direction, and I urge all of my colleagues to oppose it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to ask a brief question or comment.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under 29(2)(a) I am pleased to rise to ask the Member for Edmonton-Glenora if she would continue letting us listen to some of the experiences that she's had as a legislator and as a school board trustee. You'll find that all of her comments are bound by the depth of her experience, and it's a delight listening to her speak with a great deal of knowledge about the effects of government funding on municipalities, or lack of thereof, I should say, and how, in fact, the local municipalities under Bill 56 are impeded in their long-term planning by not being able to rely upon the MSI funding, as they have in the past.

8:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did, actually, recently pass the 10-year mark of elected service. At the time I didn't stop to reflect on that, but I appreciate the comment from my colleague from Edmonton-McClung.

I can tell you that there were years when I served on the Edmonton public school board where we didn't get infrastructure projects, where we got none, and then there were some years where we got a good number. The truth is that there was still a significant – significant – backlog in terms of infrastructure needs for the city of Edmonton. I know it was the same for the city of Calgary. There was about a billion dollars' worth of deferred maintenance in Edmonton schools at the time in which I decided to put my name forward to run for MLA and have a chance to try to reverse some of that impact on our communities.

There were boilers in our schools that were over a hundred years old, where you had to call the retired maintenance worker and see if they would be able to come in and help make a part to repair that boiler. This is part of the legacy of deep cuts that really began in the 1990s and that we have never caught up to as a province in terms of addressing that significant backlog that was left to us, that significant debt to our public assets, to the facilities that we rely on as people of this province.

When I see this government take that same path in breaking its word, breaking its promise to the people of Alberta around no new taxes, well, absolutely there will be new taxes as a result of this bill, Bill 56, that the government is bringing forward here today. When they break their word about affordability and add, again in Bill 56, a sneaky tax to tax your right to call 911 from your cellphone, when I see that there are such significant contractions to the promises that were made, broken promises around infrastructure for our partners across this province, I reflect on some of my experiences and, I'm sure, experiences that others who've been elected to local government have in this place. Not just in this caucus. I'm sure that there are members in the government caucus who have lived through their frustration with deferred maintenance for their local schools, for their local municipal infrastructure, including libraries and other community assets, rec centres, pools being a big one.

When the government continues to make the same kinds of backward mistakes that were made in the '90s, that had negative impacts, that our kids and our communities, our families are still living with today, and continues to dig a deeper hole through its actions in this place, including Bill 56, I have to say how frustrated I am that the government is choosing to relive a failed narrative and at the same time drawing bigger debt than we've ever seen in this province.

Again it comes back to choices. Governing is about choices. Leading is about choices, whether you're leading your household, whether you're leading in your place of work, whether you're leading your province and you have that tremendous honour and responsibility to do so. And the choice to put large, profitable corporations and a project that was tied to the re-election of Donald Trump as a higher priority than keeping promises to the people of Alberta, including our municipal partners, I think really says something about character and about priorities and about one's word, Mr. Speaker.

These are a few of the thoughts I have. Again I urge all members of this Assembly to vote no on Bill 56.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. the Minister of Municipal . . .

Mr. McIver: Affairs. I'm just trying to assist, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. I appreciate that. However, I believe you've already spoken to the bill, which . . .

Mr. McIver: Oh, I did the introduction. All right. No worries.

The Speaker: Yes, which proves a challenge for you to speak to it additionally.

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

The Speaker: A point of order has been called. The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Point of Order Referring to Party Affiliation

Mr. McIver: Several members opposite are wearing their party's logo on their face. That's against the rules of this place.

The Speaker: I'm not sure if it's a logo of their caucus or of the party. If it is of the party, of course that would be inappropriate.

Ms Hoffman: It's the Alberta crest.

The Speaker: I'll look into the issue further. We have taken a wide latitude on the use of masks in the Chamber.

Member Ceci: It's like the flag.

Ms Hoffman: It's the crest.

The Speaker: Order. [interjection] The hon. Speaker is on his feet. I think that I don't need help from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, but I appreciate your generosity. I will confer and report back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has risen.

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

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

Keystone XL Pipeline

70. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express profound dismay at the revocation of the permit issued by the President of the United States authorizing the Keystone XL pipeline border crossing as the Assembly is of the view the decision will:

- (a) lead to the loss of an estimated 60,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs associated with the Keystone XL project in both Canada and the United States;
- (b) undermine North American energy security, making the United States more dependent on OPEC oil imports in the future;
- (c) damage the critically important Canada-U.S. bilateral relationship; and

be it further resolved that the Assembly express its gratitude to the majority of members of the United States Senate and

the coalition of state governments who are seeking a reversal of this decision; and

that the Assembly call upon the government of the United States to compensate the government of Alberta and TC Energy for damages created by the arbitrary revocation of the presidential permit.

[Adjourned debate March 24: Mr. Nally]

The Speaker: Hon. members, before the Assembly is Government Motion 70. Is there anyone wishing to speak? The hon. the Premier has the call.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to be uncharacteristically brief. I think this is an important opportunity for the Assembly to speak to an issue of critical importance to Alberta. As you know, getting increased access for our world-class energy products to global markets is existential for our economic future.

It wasn't long ago that the opponents of our energy industry, including the Official Opposition here in this place, were arguing: "Roll up the carpet. It's over. Close down the Alberta energy industry. It has no future." What a difference a year makes, Mr. Speaker. We're now selling Alberta energy at WTI prices north of \$60 with the tightest differentials in history. WCS is north of \$50. Merrill Lynch yesterday made a projection of Brent prices in the third quarter of this year of \$80 a barrel. That would imply a \$75 WTI, but here's the kicker. We are, in Alberta, producing more crude oil than at any time in the history of our province. In the last quarter we averaged 3.84 million barrels per day. Three point eight four million barrels per day. So much for an industry that had no future according to the NDP and the green left, that wants to land-lock this energy.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen through the COVID crisis is that the uneconomic nature of U.S. shale oil and gas has become evident. The churn and burn of capital, which led to a doubling of U.S. production under the great climate change warrior Barack Obama – they doubled production, but they didn't make money doing it. They were churning and burning through mountains of capital, and they managed to go up to 12 million barrels per day. Well, it now appears that reality has caught up with the American oil industry, and they are down 2 million to 3 million barrels per day for a long time to come, and that opens up a huge opportunity for the capital-efficient Canadian industry. All we need is the infrastructure to get our energy to them.

That is why last year Alberta's government made a hugely important strategic decision to get construction started to create good jobs on the ground with Keystone XL through the \$1 billion U.S. preferred equity investment and the availability of \$6 billion in loan guarantees. Why was that necessary? I'll tell you why, briefly, Mr. Speaker. It's because TC Energy, a great Alberta company, had already invested over \$6 billion of their shareholder dollars into a project that had faced endless harassment and lawfare from the American green left coalition that constitute the so-called Tar Sands Campaign that began at the Rockefeller brothers foundation in 2008.

They saw the Keystone XL pipeline as an existential threat to their goal of land-locking Alberta energy, which is why they, through people like Tom Steyer, the U.S. San Francisco hedge fund billionaire, who made his money, by the way, on things like coal and gas – Mr. Steyer spent over \$200 million supporting candidates in the United States who opposed the Keystone XL process. Eventually he managed to persuade his friend President Obama to veto it in 2015.

8:50

Fast-forward to 2019. This government was approached by TC Energy. They said: “After a \$6 billion investment we’ve got a presidential permit. The majority of Americans support this, every state government along the line supports it, all of the American unions support it, and First Nations are signing up. We’ve got plans to make it a net zero operation pipeline through contracts with renewable providers, et cetera, but the green left has been so effective at spooking investors and creating uncertainty through the campaign of lawfare that we’re unable to capitalize the balance for construction. We’re ready to press go, we’re ready to put pipe in the ground, we’re ready to create jobs, we’re ready to make this a reality, but we need some assistance to derisk it.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, we took a long, hard look at this. We went through multiple levels of careful due diligence. We contracted world-class financial advisers on how best to structure a prospective investment that would minimize risk for Alberta taxpayers while maximizing benefit to our economy, and ultimately that’s why we decided in March of last year to proceed with that investment. Now, I should add that when we did so, then candidate Vice-president Biden was the only major Democrat candidate for the primary who had not signed on to the declaration to veto Keystone XL, and we had some very fruitful discussions with U.S. unions.

Normally this would interest the NDP because – I mean, now they’ve just become the party of government unions. They used to be the party of private-sector unions, too. Actually, the NDP in Alberta was born in a coal mine. They want to shut down all the coal mines now. It was actually the coal mines in the Crowsnest Pass and the workers there who were the first to unionize in Alberta, the first to create a socialist party. That was the parentage of the NDP, conceived in a coal mine, that they’ve abandoned, Mr. Speaker, just as they’ve abandoned the building trades unions: LIUNA, the steelworkers, the AFL-CIO, and all of them who strongly support the Keystone XL project. And all of those unions were supporting Mr. Biden’s campaign. They came to us and said: “Don’t worry. Joe is a pro-jobs Democrat. He’s a builder. He’s a doer. He’s not one of these members of the new left, that wants to tear everything down and throw union members out of work. He wants to create good-paying jobs for union members.”

“We’re good to roll with Joe,” we were told by the private-sector unions in the United States, so, yes, we took a risk. But, Mr. Speaker, you know what? I’ve more than my share of differences with Prime Minister Trudeau, but – credit where it’s due – the federal government derisked the Trans Mountain expansion, TMX, after Kinder Morgan felt that they could not build in Canada because of regulatory uncertainty and politics from the left, including from the NDP. The federal government stepped in, and they derisked that project, and this government felt: listen, if the federal government did its part to derisk a major coastal pipeline, then Alberta better do its part, too. We stepped up with that investment, eyes wide open, knowing there was risk.

Mr. Speaker, we were shocked in June, when a spokesman for the Biden campaign, not the vice-president himself, the former vice-president at the time, not the candidate but a spokesman, a relatively mid-level staffer in his campaign, issued a statement by Twitter that, if elected, President Biden would veto, rescind the presidential permit on the border crossing. In fact, in the entire duration of an 18-month Biden campaign he never once spoke to this proactively. He only mentioned it twice responsively in news conferences. What does this tell me? At least that the green left successfully managed to take control over critical staff positions, and – let me be blunt about this – they managed to roll the unions.

I can tell you that I’ve spoken to the president of the U.S. building trades. I’ve spoken to the senior people in other major U.S. unions. They are not happy that they got rolled by the same green left that’s taken over Alberta’s NDP. Same thing where they went from a working person’s party to an antidevelopment, anti oil and gas party.

An Hon. Member: Antijob party.

Mr. Kenney: An antijob party. Same kind of transformation that happened down there. I can tell you that unions are not happy, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, the U.S. building trades. I want to thank LIUNA. I want to thank the steelworkers. I want to thank the AFL-CIO. I want to thank millions of hard-working women and men, union members in the United States and in Canada, their affiliates here, who have been full-throated supporters of the Keystone XL project and of this government’s investment. They are astonished to see the NDP, which masquerades as the voice of working people, turn tail, the NDP that always opposed KXL. When the Leader of the Opposition, then Premier was asked, “Do you support Keystone XL?” on a CBC radio interview, she said, quote: no. Unquote. The NDP wasn’t just passively opposed to it. They actually sent MPs down to Washington in 2014 to lobby the Obama administration to veto the project, stabbing Alberta workers in the back. That is what they did.

But we weren’t going to accept it. That’s why we made that carefully considered and prudent investment. Now, Mr. Speaker, obviously we deeply regret the decision that President Biden made to revoke the permit through an executive order within hours of being sworn in in January of this year. We particularly reject that he did not give Canada, his closest friend and ally, the dignity of a chance to be heard, to make the case about how KXL and its 820,000 barrels a day of additional shipment could work within Canada’s ambitious climate targets and emissions targets. That’s not how you treat friends.

Let me just add, by the way, how passing strange it is that the Biden administration, that killed this Canadian pipeline, that undermined North American energy independence, has refused to enforce a bipartisan congressional law to impose sanctions on Russia for the construction of the new pipeline to western Europe, a pipeline which is designed explicitly to cut Ukraine out of transshipment of energy from Russia to western Europe. This is part of Vladimir Putin’s war of aggression on Ukraine, a country that has deep roots and relevance to this province. Vladimir Putin is trying to dominate western European energy markets through this new pipeline, and President Biden is enabling him to do so politically by refusing to impose the sanctions called for by law. What does it say to us as Canadians that the new U.S. administration is willing to facilitate, effectively, Putin’s pipeline but kill Canada’s?

Mr. Speaker, it is inexplicable, but so, too, is the nonresponse from Canada’s government to President Biden’s veto. That is why I indicated there must be consequences. We cannot allow this to pass without consequences because the NDP’s allies in American politics are working away overnight to shut down virtually every other path of shipment of our energy. The NDP’s ally Governor Whitmer in Michigan has signed an executive order decommissioning the 60-year-old line 5 pipeline, that ships 650,000 barrels of primarily Alberta crude through Michigan into Ontario. It provides half the fuel for Ontario and Quebec and over half the fuel for the state of Michigan itself. Without that pipeline the airplanes can’t take off out of Detroit airport. They can’t fuel the refineries that I had visited, co-owned now by Cenovus and Husky in northern Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the green left is on the march trying to shut down line 5 just as the green left is on the march in Minnesota to oppose Enbridge’s line 3 replacement that, if

completed, we hope, later this year, knock on wood, will add about 380,000 barrels a day of egress for our industry.

9:00

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the governor of Minnesota with whom I have worked. He is a true champion of the working man and woman. He is a classic, old school Democrat who wants jobs. He wants resources. He wants opportunity, and he is not going to listen to the green left. He is supporting that project, and I truly appreciate the governor and his administration's support. We believe it's going to happen, but here's the point: if the veto on KXL is allowed to go without a response, what precedent does that set for line 5, for line 3, and for other projects? That's why we must fight. That's why we are fighting. We are in close consultation with our partner TC Energy about the legal remedies that are available. I believe we have a strong case to make under the NAFTA chapter 11 provision for investor protections. More on that will follow.

Mr. Speaker, we also haven't given up politically. I want to further thank another good pro-jobs Democrat, Virginia Senator Joe Manchin. They don't like him over there. Joe Manchin: he is pro jobs. He's from a coal mine. Maybe that's why they don't like him. He's a former coal miner, just like the NDP was born out of the coal mines. Joe Manchin is an unapologetic supporter of private-sector, resource, union jobs, mining jobs. I am grateful that Senator Manchin calls himself a great friend of Alberta. He can't wait to get up here. We promised to take him fishing and go and see some of the beautiful environment here.

Senator Manchin led a 52 to 48 vote in the U.S. Senate last month on a rider, on a budget bill to compel the President of the United States to reverse his veto of KXL. Unfortunately it's not a veto-proof vote, but thank you, Senator Manchin. Thank you, Democrat Senator Tester. Thank you to 52 members of the U.S. Senate, but that's not all, Mr. Speaker. That's not all. We've got 21 U.S. states. A minimum of 21 U.S. states have Alberta's back. I've got to say, a little irony here, we're getting more enthusiastic support from the U.S. states than from the government of Canada. Go figure.

An Hon. Member: Or from the NDP.

Mr. Kenney: Well, certainly more. Forget about even the NDP. Forget about it. That is true isn't it? I was on the phone on Holy Thursday, last Thursday, with the governor of Alaska. You know, Alaska is not close to us here. It's not. The governor of Alaska enthusiastically telling me about how he is part of the 21-state coalition that is assembling a legal challenge to President Biden's veto of Keystone XL. You know what tonight's motion represents, Mr. Speaker? It represents an opportunity for Alberta's Legislature, including the NDP, to do the same thing.

We have 21 U.S. states, and I've been burning up the phone lines in the past couple of months with Attorneys General, with governors, and other Senators, and we have 21 minimum U.S. states that are going to come together in a legal challenge to that decision. Mr. Speaker, I believe Alberta's Legislature should stand behind them. Those U.S. friends of ours, Democrats and Republicans alike, they have Alberta's back. Tonight the NDP should show that it has Alberta's back, too, by voting for this motion. This is the testing time because the NDP is – I'll be polite and parliamentary about this Mr. Speaker. They've tried to use weasel words to get out of their opposition to Keystone XL. Now there's a very clear choice, a motion on the floor. House leader, can you give me the language of the motion?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Sure.

Mr. Kenney: I'll just read it into the record. There's a motion on the floor that we'll be voting on in a few moments to support this

government's efforts to defend the investment made by Alberta taxpayers in this critical project. Mr. Speaker, if the NDP votes against this, they will just be confirming once again that they've always opposed the project.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express profound dismay at the revocation of the permit issued by the President of the United States authorizing the Keystone XL pipeline border crossing as the Assembly is of the view that the decision will:

- (a) lead to the loss of an estimated 60,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs associated with the Keystone XL project in both Canada and the United States;
- (b) undermine North American energy security, making the United States more dependent on OPEC oil imports in the future;
- (c) damage the critically important Canada-U.S. bilateral relationship; and

be it further resolved that the Assembly express its gratitude to the majority of members of the United States Senate and the coalition of state governments who are seeking the reversal of the decision; and

that the Assembly call upon the government of the United States to compensate the government of Alberta and TC Energy for damages created by the arbitrary revocation of the presidential permit.

I could've written that myself, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I think I did.

Mr. Speaker, what could they possibly disagree with on the other side? They don't think the U.S. should pay damages for having changed the rules after the project started?

I want to close this with a personal story, Mr. Speaker. Back in August, I believe, maybe September, I went out and visited work being done. As they were stringing pipe out there around Oyen in east-central Alberta – by the way, about 2,000 good-paying union jobs created here in Alberta alone this past year on that project. The CBC, my favourite media outlet, reported that the KXL investment had created, quote, a mini boom in east-central Alberta. I went out with folks from TC Energy and the contractors and visited and could see first-hand the progress that was being made. A fellow came up to me, hard hat, coveralls, and said, "Premier, can I have a word with you?" And I thought, "Oh, it doesn't sound great." I said, "Sure." He said, "I'm the shop steward here. I'm running the . . ." I forget the name, which particular unit he was representing. He said: "We've got this job. I'm a 20-year union man. Normally I'm told that I'm supposed to support the NDP, but I want you to know, sir, how much I and all of us appreciate what you've done to make this project happen out here. You know, you get a lot of criticism for it. You made the right call. We're out here putting food on the table for our families because of it."

Mr. Speaker, let's stand up for men like that. Let's stand up for them and say that getting that pipeline built is the right thing for the environment because, as the U.S. State Department calculated under the Obama administration, moving it by rail will actually increase carbon emissions. It's the right thing for global security because U.S. imports of Russian oil have increased in 2021. It's right to get it from Canada rather than Putin's dictatorship. It's the right thing for Canadian jobs. It's the right thing for hard-working union members on both sides of the border. That's why I move that the Assembly adopt this motion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others who wish to speak? The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and join in the debate on Government Motion 70. The note that the Premier ended on was the need to support workers. I would absolutely agree that we need to support workers in this province,

particularly during this incredible spike in unemployment that we are seeing, which is why it strikes me as ridiculous that this government has not announced their Alberta jobs now program, has not been able to spend \$185 million given to them by the federal government.

I needed to start by talking about that. Because with the cancellation of the KXL pipeline, a plan to support the workers impacted was needed, and we have not seen that from this government. We have not seen a plan or a long-term strategy to support Alberta's future, and even when the federal government provides \$148 million that needs to be spent by March 31, this government doesn't get it out the door. That hurts the workers. We should be doing everything we can to support them.

9:10

Now, the Premier also spoke briefly in his comments about mid-level bureaucrats making policy by tweet, yet his government had no problem firing 20,000 educational assistants by tweet. He mentioned changing the rules after the project has started. How about changing employment after your contract has started, Mr. Speaker? Certainly, there's a little bit of back and forth.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

Now, I want to be very, very clear that our government worked very hard to fight for the KXL pipeline as well as the Trans Mountain pipeline, derisking these pipelines. We were able to be successful with Trans Mountain due to significant work on the part of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the entire caucus. As well, fighting for KXL, we were able to derisk it significantly by investing in committing barrels to that pipeline, very different from the measures that this government has taken. We have been clear that we would not have put Albertans' money at risk.

Now, the Premier has referred to this in his remarks just now as a carefully considered and prudent decision, so I suspect that I will have his support for an amendment that I would like to make to this government motion at this point, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has proposed an amendment. This will be amendment A2, and I'll ask the member to read it into the record, please.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Government Motion 70 be amended by adding the following after "presidential permit."

And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly request the Auditor General to audit the agreement between the government of Alberta and TC Energy entered into in 2020 in respect of the Keystone XL and report to the Legislative Assembly on the results of the audit by September 1, 2022.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, given that the Premier has just referred to this as a carefully considered and prudent decision, the idea of a performance audit, given the scale of this investment and given how prudent it was, I suggest that it is warranted. I intend this amendment as a friendly amendment, not to change the substance of the motion but simply to add on that having the Auditor General perform a performance audit is warranted and makes sense given the government has been less than forthcoming about the details of the deal.

Now, the Premier has stated that the deal has undergone vigorous vetting and would earn a profit for the government. That assessment, obviously, was incorrect. Government members have voted at the Public Accounts Committee to prevent a similar motion to this from coming forward, but we have that opportunity now as a Legislature to commit to fiscal transparency, to commit to making

sure that we're taking those prudent steps with Albertans' money going forward. Because the government is not allowing any oversight over this, it's appropriate to have the independent officer of the Legislature look into this. I suspect, given that this was carefully considered and a prudent decision, that the government had this as part of its plan, did its due diligence, and that there should be no challenge in passing this amendment and making sure we have that follow-up and that accountability to Albertans.

I hope all members of this Assembly will support this amendment that I think adds value for Alberta taxpayers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief on this amendment. Where to start, though. I mean, that member was a former cabinet minister inside this province, who certainly knows how the Auditor General's office works and knows that the Auditor General is more than capable of conducting audits and does at all times and certainly doesn't need the Alberta Legislature to call upon his office to do so.

While having a conversation about the deal itself, Mr. Speaker, may, I would say, go beyond me, I think it's a fair thing to raise with the government. It certainly, though, takes away from the point of this motion, to try to bring forward an amendment to amend a motion, as the Premier very clearly outlined just a few moments ago – I know the member heard him – to show the support of the Alberta Legislature for the people and the states and the Senators and those who are standing with the province of Alberta about something that is extremely wrong that the President of the United States has done, to send a clear message that this Chamber, Albertans' Chamber, stands with those states, those Senators, and others to say that what has taken place is wrong. It sends a clear message that we support Keystone and that we support the jobs that would be created as a result of Keystone, and by bringing forward an amendment like this, it waters down the motion and brings into the conversation something that is not relevant for the purpose of this motion.

If the hon. member would like to learn more about what has taken place financially within the province's budget – I assume, Mr. Speaker, that she participated in the estimates process and likely asked many questions. She asks questions inside this Chamber in question period each and every day. She could also use the role of the Public Accounts Committee to be able to ask questions about that.

But this Chamber needs to send a clear message about this issue. I have to ask myself: is it this member's and her party's way of trying to find an excuse to stand with their leader, the Leader of the Opposition, who has already said that they don't support Keystone? Is that what the plan is, to try to water down this motion and give a reason not to vote for it? If that's the case, let me assure them, through you, Mr. Speaker, to them, that we're not going to give them that opportunity. They have to decide tonight whether they stand with Albertans and stand with the men and women who work inside the energy industry.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on amendment A2 are there any others wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on amendment A2.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, Government Motion 70 is before the Assembly. Are there others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Government House Leader for bringing this motion forward. I stand here today in support of Motion 70, which expresses the profound dismay of our province at the revocation of the permit issued by the President of the United States authorizing the Keystone XL pipeline border crossing. I stand here today in support of our oil and gas industry, which is a driving force of Canada's economic prosperity and quality of life, and I also stand here today in support of thousands of private-sector union workers that are employed directly or indirectly within our oil and gas industry. I want to assure you that these thousands of tradesmen and -women around the province are definitely not fans of Extinction Rebellion and want to support our oil and gas industry here in the province.

As a dual-ticketed tradesman and as a member of local 1325 of carpenters and joiners of America I know how difficult the revocation of the Keystone XL permit has been on many union workers and the uncertainty that it brings to the families that they're just simply trying to provide for. These are ironworkers, pipefitters, carpenters, scaffolders. These are all men and women that just simply want to work in the oil and gas industry, pay their mortgages, and just live their normal lives, take their kids to soccer practice. The Keystone project being cancelled was a shot to their families, a shot to their livelihoods.

I find it shameful, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite, who claim to speak for those private-sector union workers, those workers that just simply want to provide for their families, were very upfront about wanting the cancellation of this incredible project. This cancellation has not only been hard for Alberta's union workers but also for the tens of thousands of union workers all across the United States. It is estimated that the revocation of the Keystone XL border crossing permit issued by the President of the United States will lead to an estimated loss of 60,000 direct and indirect and induced jobs in Canada and the U.S. Those are a lot of mortgage payments.

9:20

You know, these are great paying jobs that I know I have experienced myself as a tradesman on many industrial sites here in Alberta, and these great paying jobs would have provided food on the table for tens of thousands of families across our two countries. The decision to revoke the Keystone permit does not only affect the thousands of great paying jobs but also undermines the energy security of North America and, in particular, the energy security of the United States.

Many political leaders within the United States understand this issue, and I would like to thank the many governors and Attorneys General that have expressed support for this pipeline. You know, Canada and the United States are interconnected in so many ways and continue to have the largest trade relationship in the entire world. We need each other, and we are better when we work together. The Keystone XL pipeline is a continuation of that interconnected nature between our two incredible nations, and I'm sure that most Americans would like to have their energy come from their northern neighbour instead of OPEC dictatorships. Our environmental regulations are among the highest in the world, and as many Americans know, we are at the forefront of human rights, which is something that is not seen among the OPEC dictatorships.

Those that are so excited about the cancellation of Keystone don't really think about that, so let's talk really briefly about some of those OPEC dictatorships and their rights when it comes to the LGBTQ2S-plus community, women's rights, religious freedom. Anyone that wants Keystone to actually be cancelled is saying that those individuals that are fighting for freedom in other countries don't matter. If someone was actually in favour of LGBTQ2S-plus

rights, they would want projects like Keystone to happen to be able to displace oil from OPEC dictatorships. That's important. These are issues that members opposite always claim to have, but there's a real, tangible way to be able to support those communities here in our country. I urge them to actually stand up in a real, tangible way and to put their voice about how to support those individuals and those groups in other countries.

Our oil is produced ethically with a strong participation from the First Nations that have inhabited Alberta for over 10,000 years, and America will continue to need oil and gas in the decades to come even with the transition over to renewable energy. This transition will take time, and until it happens, the United States will need oil and gas as our economy begins to recover from the economic devastation caused by this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, the transition to renewables does not mean that there will not be demand for oil and gas. Oh, no. Oil is needed for solar panels, for wind turbines, for electric cars. Demand for oil is expected to grow, and with the permit of the Keystone XL pipeline rescinded, American consumers can expect gas prices to increase as demand begins to overtake supply.

Now, I don't want to wade into American politics. I'm sure Americans don't want me to either, but I will say one thing. President Biden promised to work with allies and have a more co-operative approach with other nations such as Canada, his best friend. That is a worthwhile promise and one that I'm happy to see, but to rescind the cross-border approval permit on his first day of office does not show that level of co-operation. You know, I have a deep respect for President Biden and his office, and I had hoped that there would be some kind of talk, some type of communication between the new administration and Alberta's government or with even the federal government before this decision was made, but because this did not happen, I fear there will be investment uncertainty in both Canada and the United States, which will affect Albertan families for many years.

Businesses want to know that their investments won't be derailed and changed with every new United States administration, and that is why Alberta's government invested in the Keystone pipeline last year, to help advance construction and give that level of certainty to TC Energy Corp. Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Biden administration has a change of heart over rescinding this permit, and I hope that they see the error of their ways and see the impact that it has made to families all over this great continent.

Alberta's government is at the forefront of the fight against climate change, and the Keystone XL pipeline would reduce the emissions produced by the transportation of oil by rail and overseas with oil tankers. The Keystone XL pipeline would create more capacity for Alberta oil while creating more opportunities for oil refining in the United States. I hope that the Biden administration has a change of heart, but if they don't, the United States government should compensate the government of Alberta and TC Energy for the damages caused by this arbitrary revocation of the presidential permit.

I urge everyone in this House today to support Motion 70, support the families that want to work on this pipeline, that just simply want to support their families. I urge everyone in this House to support Motion 70.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the call.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to speak to Government Motion 70 and express my dismay at the dismay the government expresses or wishes this House to express over the

decision made by U.S. President Biden. I posit to the House that the only people that were dismayed that this decision actually took place were government members of this Legislature and perhaps Bigfoot.

Realistically, there were all kinds of very strong signals that should have been interpreted by the government opposite and the Premier in particular to know that this wasn't just a risk. It wasn't just a risk, as the Premier described it, that they took after consultation; this was a gamble. It was a bet. There's a difference, Mr. Speaker, between a risk and gambling. Taking a risk, you certainly have an idea, a bit of an understanding of all the information at hand, and the questions are answered in a very significant way. When you're taking a gamble, when you're making a bet, there's a whole lot of unknowns, and it's either you win or you lose. Yet this government was willing to take that gamble and that risk with billions of dollars of Alberta's tax money, which they ended up losing when they lost that bet.

I know that the members opposite like to talk about how important this would have been as a job creator, and it certainly would have been. It would have been a major boon to our Alberta economy had this pipeline gone ahead. We certainly were disappointed by that decision as well, but if indeed this government was so bound and determined to protect jobs in this province, was so bound and determined to look at the economic liability of our economy over the next short term, they would be doing everything possible to get the green line built, Mr. Speaker, in Calgary, where 20,000 jobs are simply waiting to be filled by workers in Calgary to build public infrastructure that will move Calgary forward into the next century of progress.

Yet this government refuses to acknowledge those decisions that are at hand. They could go ahead – it's within their control – and move forward with jobs that are ready to go, but this champion of jobs instead decides to rail against a foreign President who has within his rights the decision to change policies. In fact, what they did was within their purview, and it's something that this Premier, this government should have been prepared for, should have been well aware of. In fact, I'm sure they were, but they were willing to gamble, and that roll of the dice has cost them. Now they're looking, Mr. Speaker, to try to save face with the excuses that Government Motion 70 provides.

I know that I asked the government to be transparent about the cost, but they were really not. They're not talking about what losses this bet that they made on the KXL has incurred.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move an amendment to Government Motion 70.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. If you could just pass it to the page and then just wait a moment until I have a copy of the original.

Hon. members, this will be referred to as amendment A3.

Please proceed.

9:30

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to amendment A3 what we hope to achieve is to have the government clearly acknowledge the amount that they were willing to gamble in this KXL experiment, the amount they put not only at risk but as the bet they were willing to make with Albertans' tax money. What I'd like to do is to move that Government Motion 70 be amended by (a) striking out "and" at the end of clause (c) and by (b) adding the following immediately after clause (c):

- (d) result in a loss to Albertans of public funds in the range of \$1.3 billion and \$7.5 billion.

We had asked the government to be transparent about the cost, but they have chosen not to be. This amendment will make sure, Mr. Speaker, that the motion acknowledges the range of how much the taxpayers are spending on the Premier's bet on Donald Trump. We've seen the Premier trying to distract from his own failures and the fact that he does not have a plan for Albertans that have lost their jobs because of this. We should be open and transparent about the cost.

This absolute failure by the Premier and his government to have any type of a fallback plan, except this type of a motion to try to deflect from the folly of their decision, is a true failure of leadership, and it's another example of the UCP government and the Premier failing to have a real fallback position on some major, major decisions that they've made; for example, waiting upon the Supreme Court decision here recently. They also had no fallback position once that Supreme Court decision didn't go the way they'd anticipated. No fallback position. Now, that is not the hallmark of a government that has everything in order and a government that is prepared to do what's in the best interests of Albertans.

I'm certain that most Albertans would be very, very interested in knowing exactly what the losses are that have been incurred by this reckless bet on the presidential race. To say, "Well, gee whiz, based on everything we could see, this is the way it was going to go" isn't an acceptable excuse, Mr. Speaker. It is a reckless way to run a government, and it was a bet that was made on the basis of incomplete information. It was a known folly that this bet was made, and the potential to lose up to \$7.5 billion is something that Albertans are dismayed about. That's where the real dismay should lie.

I encourage all members, Mr. Speaker, to support amendment A3 and insist that the government provide the Alberta public the full range of costs that they've managed to gamble away with their support for KXL and the bet on President Trump.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on amendment A3, I see the hon. the Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, again, for an opportunity to rise and express my disappointment in the Member for Edmonton-McClung. I do believe that's his constituency; I do apologize if I have it wrong. Judging by his reaction – it's the only time I haven't been heckled tonight – it's probably clear that I got it right. But yet again we have a member rising on a motion that is about 60,000 direct and indirect jobs and trying to make this about partisan politics between the Official Opposition and the government.

There is ample opportunity inside this place, Mr. Speaker, to spend time talking about that hon. member's concerns with the government, and I'm sure he'll hear lots of concerns from the government about concerns with the Official Opposition and their plans for this province. But, at the end of the day, we're debating a motion that is very clear about making a couple of clear statements that this Assembly is of the view that the decision that has been made by the President of the United States will "lead to the loss of an estimated 60,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs associated with the Keystone XL project in both Canada and the United States." That hon. member shortly will have to stand and be counted on whether he stands with those 60,000 people or if he stands with the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who is against Keystone and other pipelines.

The other thing it says is that the decision undermines "North American energy security, making the United States more dependent on OPEC oil imports in the future" and damages "the critically important Canada-U.S. bilateral relationship." Again, that

hon. member will have to stand and be counted shortly on whether he stands with others who are standing against this or stands with the men and women of Alberta, particularly those who work within the energy industry. That's the choice that is before them tonight. Playing partisan games with amendments to try to water down the support motion that would send a clear statement from this Chamber is shameful. I suspect this will pass, and it will send a clear message to the world where the Alberta Legislature stands, but the real question is: where does the Official Opposition stand, and where does the Member for Edmonton-McClung stand?

The Speaker: Hon. members, amendment A3 is before the Chamber. Are there others wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Speaker: On Government Motion 70, anyone wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise this evening to speak on Government Motion 70. We've now had the opportunity to hear from a number of members this evening, but what I haven't heard from the opposition yet is a definitive answer as to whether or not they will support this motion. That lack of clarity, to me, is quite concerning. I think the Premier outlined it pretty nicely that the anti-oil, anti-energy, anti-Alberta NDP – we know where they stand. I just wanted to hear it. I suspect we won't hear it until the vote, and I am waiting with bated breath.

With that said, I am deeply concerned with newly elected President Biden revoking the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. Like many other members here, I am deeply upset and confused as to why President Biden would want to cancel this important project for Canada and the United States. The cancellation of this Keystone XL pipeline project will lead to the loss of an estimated 60,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs associated. These are jobs both in Canada and across the line in the United States. In 2019 the United States imported 9.14 million barrels of petroleum per day, and 3.7 million of those barrels came from Canada.

Canada and the United States have commitments to environmental stewardship, combatting climate change in the North American energy sector. It is no secret that Americans will continue to use millions of barrels per day for years to come, and President Biden's green jobs plan acknowledges that exact fact. But his transition away from responsible Canadian energy makes no sense. By investing in the Keystone XL pipeline and using Canadian oil, he is keeping his promise of green jobs. Canada is a leader among oil-producing nations when it comes to the environment and addressing the challenges of climate change and human rights. Over the past decades Canada has dramatically reduced the carbon intensity of each barrel of oil produced right here and continues to make improvements through huge investments in technologies that reduce emissions and environmental impacts.

Along with Canada's commitments to responsible energy development, TC Energy has made a commitment as well. In January of this year TC Energy announced a new sustainable energy initiative for the Keystone XL project. The operations of the Keystone XL pipeline will be fully powered by renewable energy sources. It is the first of its kind, Mr. Speaker. TC Energy has an ongoing commitment to sustainability, thoughtfully finding innovative ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing communities with the reliable energy needed today.

If this isn't the commitment to the green jobs program that President Biden wants to see, then I don't believe he's being realistic at all. Without energy from Canada, the United States will

be forced to rely on OPEC oil from countries like Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, who will not only not follow environmental standards that Canada has set for ourselves but also take advantage of the United States. Keystone XL is also a project that will strengthen the bond between our nations as we will work together. Energy products, primarily Alberta crude oil, are Canada's top exports to the United States. This represents more than \$100 billion in value every year. Keystone XL will also greatly benefit the United States as it would create more than 40,000 jobs in the U.S. and add more than \$3 billion to the GDP.

9:40

Due to the COVID pandemic countries across the world have been hurting economically. It makes no sense for the United States to turn down job creation and boosting their economy's GDP at such a time as this. Our government and many other states in the United States such as Texas and Montana understand the importance of the Keystone XL pipeline for economic development and growth. Twenty-one states also understand the importance of the Keystone XL pipeline, which makes it even more confusing why members opposite, 24 of them, don't understand it. This great initiative is led by members from Texas and Montana that have said that President Biden overstepped when he revoked the permit for KXL on his first day in office.

I would like to express my gratitude to the majority of the members of the United States Senate and the coalition of state governments who are seeking a reversal of this decision. Keystone XL is a very important project for the United States and for Canada. It's going to be the first pipeline to be fully powered by renewable energy and commit to President Biden's green jobs plan. This is also supported by many stakeholders such as contractors, manufacturers, skilled trades, and indigenous investments such as Natural Law Energy. There is no rational reason, none at all, why President Biden cancelled this project only to appease extremist environmentalist groups.

The Keystone XL pipeline will create tens of thousands of jobs and boost our own GDP. Our government will continue to fight for the jobs of Albertans and ensure that we are promoting our amazing energy sector. Alberta's government will also continue to promote Alberta's environmental record, indigenous participation in the energy sector, and technology and renewables growth.

I encourage all members of this Assembly that support Alberta and Canada energy to vote in support of this Motion 70. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Government Motion 70, are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I won't take long. I do want to get to the vote on this Motion 70, and members of the government will see then where I and members of the Official Opposition stand.

You know, just reflecting back on some of the things the Premier talked about, he mentioned TMX. As we know, the federal government purchased all of TMX and are following through with their building partner to complete that pipeline. That was something that was from before, when we were in government, and we wanted to derisk that construction. What we did was that we were going to assure whoever purchased the pipe that we would become a partner in that pipe if it went over a certain amount of money – I think it was around \$10 billion – and we were going to take an equity stake if it needed more than that approximate amount of money to get built. The federal government ultimately decided to do the whole thing themselves, and they're currently doing that.

You know, there was a great discussion at the cabinet table with regard to all of that. As the Premier talked about in terms of the KXL decision that the UCP took, there were multiple levels of reviews. He mentioned multiple levels of review, world-class evaluations, and that it was a strategic decision. I certainly remember the same kinds of discussion around the cabinet table when we did that. Had we followed through and derisked and put Albertans' money up and it would have been drawn down to complete TMX, we would have needed to be transparent on all of that with Albertans. They would have rightly been asking us: how did you make this decision? That's what members on this side are trying to ascertain more of, trying to understand how the decision was made, what kind of risks were involved. Was it a good bet? My colleague from Edmonton-McClung talked about it being a gamble as opposed to a strategic investment that was due to pay off well.

I have an amendment as well, Mr. Speaker, that I'd like to put forward.

The Speaker: If you just want to wait a moment. You can please proceed to the table, and I'll take a copy. Then we'll proceed as we're ready to roll.

Hon. members, this will be referred to as amendment A4.

Member Ceci: It would follow right after the last two words, "presidential permit." In putting this, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that, you know, the bulk of this government motion is directed at Senators and governors across the United States who are supportive of KXL and thanking them. I believe that they can understand that what I'm going to put is not directed towards them; it's directed to the citizens of Alberta. I think it would be appropriate for the citizens of Alberta to find out more on how the decision to invest \$1.5 billion in equity stake and a \$6 billion loan guarantee was taken by this government.

It would, as I say, continue after "presidential permit," and it would say:

And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Alberta to table in the Assembly a copy of all third-party and internal risk assessments that the government of Alberta considered prior to entering into an agreement with TC Energy in which it agreed to a \$1.5 billion equity investment in the Keystone XL project in 2020.

I'm putting this because I think Albertans are rightly concerned, want to know more about the inner workings, the thinking of the government. Was it necessary? Was it a good investment, or was it one that ultimately has resulted in billions of dollars not being put to good use in this province? I certainly think that investments of that amount of money in alternative energies, in diversification would have produced thousands and thousands of jobs, but that is not the case as a result of what has been done.

As I said, the bulk of Government Motion 70 is directed to express gratitude and to talk about compensation. I think those who would read this would know that the last bit is directed to citizens in this province who have a continuing desire to know the basis on which this decision was taken.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before the Assembly is amendment A4 to Government Motion 70. Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Speaker: On Government Motion 70, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, I'm happy to stand in this House in support of our province's energy sector. Motion 70 expresses profound disappointment that the presidential permit for the Keystone XL pipeline was cancelled. This motion also provides us a unique opportunity to vocally call out the unfair narratives and misinformation campaign put forward against our energy sector while also acknowledging, quite frankly, the environmentally friendly and safe technology and processes inherent in our Alberta energy. Like my colleagues have said, I was utterly disappointed with the news that the current United States presidential administration revoked the presidential permit authorizing the Keystone XL pipeline based, really, on extreme partisan politics.

9:50

Mr. Speaker, this decision has not only impacted the nearly 60,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs associated with this project; it has also fed into the campaigns of misinformation against Alberta's and Canada's energy industry. Misinformation campaigns like this, unfortunately, have targeted the Alberta oil sands like no other in the world while turning a blind eye to dictator and socially unjust sources of oil brought into the U.S.

From 2015 to '17 three major pipeline projects with the capacity to carry more than 2 million barrels a day to North American and global markets were cancelled due to campaigns against the Canadian oil sands and misinformation spread about the environmental impact of our energy. Keystone XL, which has been victimized by the same misinformation campaigns despite being one of the safest, most advanced, and environmentally friendly pipelines ever designed, has been cancelled twice. When new pipelines are delayed and output grows, a growing price differential emerges for Alberta oil, costing Alberta and Canada billions and billions of dollars.

Transporting crude to market by rail began in 2012 with only 9,400 barrels a day, a transportation method that is more expensive, that is environmentally much more costly and contributes more to greenhouse gases. However, only seven years later, in 2019, it was up to 412,000 barrels a day, 44 times the volume by this means of transporting oil.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's excellence in the energy industry needs to be told, and if we're going to continue to struggle to bring our energy to market at its maximum potential, then it is up to us to stand up for our province, for its economic prosperity, and for the well-being of our constituents. Central Alberta service industries that supply labour and technology and pipe and controls are all disadvantaged, even by this decision. We have work yards in central Alberta that stand empty because of the information campaign against Alberta oil, so now is the time to be vocal about what we have to offer to the world.

The other important subject that we need to consider here is the importance of energy security. Without Alberta oil, the world is more at risk of political turmoil, and the Keystone XL pipeline is one of the safest and the most environmentally friendly pipelines ever proposed and would contribute greatly to North American energy security.

Revoking the permit for this project was simply a mistake. It was viewed as a mistake by the union workers, that would have had many, many jobs because of this; it's a mistake for aboriginal peoples who had a partnership in this project, who would have been able to sustain their peoples and their prosperity; it's a mistake according to the at least 21 U.S. states that are now considering taking this to court because they believe it was a mistake; it's a mistake for the solar energy companies and the other green energy companies that would have contributed to the pumping stations and the controls and the supports all along the line of this project.

Mr. Speaker, Canadian oil is some of the most ethically sourced and environmentally clean oil on the international market that can be found anywhere on this planet, yet we continue to have to fight to bring it to market. The cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline is a huge blow to all of Canada's energy industry, which is our biggest national export. It's a tragedy for Alberta's prosperity. Every Albertan in this province benefited from the spinoff of some of this that would happen.

Unfortunately, some, like the current U.S. presidential administration, view this as a step towards transitioning to alternate energy sources, which is great, but right now providing safe, ethically sourced energy to the market is the best option that we have to work towards these other projects. Until the day comes when the world is no longer dependent on oil, we can transition to more reliable and environmentally sustainable resources, and Canadian oil will be there for part of it. To incentivize our future development, we need money and we need resources to do so, and investment into Canadian oil right now is a major step in getting us to that end.

In closing, I really am encouraged to see that there are many like-minded U.S. members that are in support of this project as well. I congratulate and thank the U.S. Senate on its support for this pipeline. I really want to express appreciation to the U.S. state governments that have expressed their support for this and who, in fact, are willing to challenge it in court and stand with us – and we stand with them – seeking a reversal of this decision. We need to work together. If we're going to complete this project, that will benefit both our countries immensely, it is of utmost importance that we work towards a sustainable future by responsibly using the products that we have today.

So I call on the Biden administration to reverse its decision and to compensate the government of Alberta and TC Energy, quite frankly, for the damages due to a unilateral political decision contrary to free trade agreements and to the goodwill between our nations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you're aware, I was born and raised in Fort McMurray, the home of Alberta's oil sands, so it's probably going to come as no shock that I'm standing up today supporting Motion 70. The people in my community take great pride in where we live and how we earn our livelihood, and I think we do that for a very good reason. Working in the oil and gas industry requires long, hard work in every type of weather, and it requires workers to often be away from their families during holidays because the need for oil doesn't take a day off. I know that in my own family we grew up with Dad often working holidays, so we would have holidays revolve around whenever he was on or off shift, and that's just how things were. I didn't realize that most people did Easter on a Sunday until I was an adult because that just wasn't a thing in our family. I think that that's not a thing in a lot of oil and gas families, and that's pretty cool.

The current presidential administration's decision to revoke the Keystone XL pipeline is, quite frankly, words that are not parliamentary, and I was so disappointed when I saw it. I wasn't surprised, but I was so disappointed because for years now the oil and gas industry has been increasingly demonized by media, celebrities looking for a quick photo op that fly in to my community – on private jets, I will let you know. Celebrities like Jane Fonda, Leo DiCaprio, James Cameron: they fly into my community on their private jet, they look around, make some scathing comment,

looking at one small piece of one small part of the process, and fly back out on their private jet. But that's indicative of the oil and gas industry, supposedly. They don't look at the reclaimed land. They don't look at the increase in how much more environmentally friendly the process has become just in the 30-odd years I've been alive. No, that's just not what their photo ops are looking for, and quite frankly I'm sick of it. I'm absolutely sick of the virtue signalling that comes from some of these people not really concerned about what they're doing.

Many people see oil and gas companies as some faceless, cold-blooded corporation, and they fail to see the hard-working people that work for these companies, the fact that these companies provide students with job opportunities in good, wonderful jobs that give them great experience. They fail to see the fact that they provide scholarships to their kids, the kids of their workers. They fail to see all of the human aspects that so many of these oil and gas companies do, and it's very clear in my community.

If you come to my community, there are so many sponsorships on many of our large buildings. We have some of the most amazing buildings – rec centres sponsored by Suncor and our aquatic centre, that's sponsored by Syncrude – and it's spectacular. We get to have world-class amenities because of the partnership that these oil and gas companies do, but unfortunately a lot of these virtue signalling celebrities that come in don't look at any of that. They just take their picture, and they leave on their private plane.

10:00

It's a shame that the lifeblood of our entire province can be so easily dismissed with the stroke of a pen or in this case, I think, a click of a mouse. Alberta contributes a disproportionate amount to Canada's economic health using the profits from the very same resource that is being politically blacklisted and culturally cancelled. The revenue that comes from Alberta oil and gas supports our country and in turn supports our province, but it also supports our southern neighbours.

Oil and gas heat our homes, it gets us to work, and those who subscribe to an anti-oil rhetoric are more than welcome to sell their vehicles and their bikes and walk to school. I guess they can't have their cellphones or their computers either because those all come from petroleum products. I guess their options are fairly limited, but they're welcome to do that. They're also welcome to shut off the heat in their homes, which would be lovely in a polar vortex like we had this winter, and to stop shopping at stores whose products are delivered using oil and gas, but we don't typically see that happening. They just fly in with their private jets.

Mr. Speaker, our oil field workers are men and women who work tirelessly, and they meet the needs of all Canadians. They should not have to tolerate demeaning insults and dismissive attitudes from public figures who employ grossly misinformed information as to the industry.

The fact is that petroleum products will continue to be used globally and will not change for the foreseeable future. Oil and gas are certainly not dead. Many of these masks that so many of us are wearing in the Chamber are produced using petroleum products. Much of what is getting our vaccine rollout uses petroleum products. So much of our medical supplies uses petroleum products. Petroleum is made using reformed oil. It's one of those things where – if we shut down the oil sands, what are we going to do to replace the petroleum? Oil is well and alive in Alberta, and we are going to continue to be global leaders in environmentally safe and ethically sourced energy for now and for generations to come.

Pipelines are absolutely the absolute safest way to transport our world-class product to market, as opposed to rail transport, which is what we are primarily using or is the suggested use, I guess. But

not only is rail more expensive; it is unequivocally more dangerous. An absolute prime example of this is the tragic 2013 incident in Lac-Mégantic, where 63 tank cars on a train carrying 7.7 million litres of petroleum crude derailed, releasing 6 million litres of oil and starting a fire and an explosion that left 47 people dead; 2,000 people were forced to flee from their homes, and a significant part of Lac-Mégantic's downtown core went up in flames. That is what this President, in cancelling, is wanting us to go towards, to go back in time.

But if we as a province are unable to get our oil products to international markets, buyers will look elsewhere, and they will look to other oil-producing companies such as Iran, Nigeria, Venezuela, Iraq, Russia, many of these countries that do not have the social and environmental standards that we have here in Canada. We operate with some of the most strict environmental regimes in the entire world as well as having human rights standards, but none of that gets brought into most of these conversations, unfortunately.

Cancelling the Keystone XL pipeline permit didn't stop any global demand for oil, but it did lead to a loss of approximately 60,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the project both here in Canada and in the United States, so this President, at the time of an economic crisis in a global pandemic, decided that the loss of that many jobs both here in Canada and in the United States in these uncertain times – to me, there's no logic to it. There is clearly no good sense. Quite frankly, it's devastating.

I think it's more important now to stand up for Canadian jobs and to stand up for our oil and gas industry. They deserve it. They've had our back for generations, and it's time that we stand up and unequivocally support this. I would urge all members of this House to stand up and show our oil and gas workers that we unequivocally support the work that they do. As Albertans we have a responsibility to provide what has been given to us with our most stringent environmental policies and exemplary labour laws' protection. Canadian and, more specifically, Alberta oil is the best energy option we have right now. Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to support this motion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Government Motion 70. Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on Government Motion 70.

An Hon. Member: Close debate.

The Speaker: Pardon me?

An Hon. Member: Close debate.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Waived.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has waived the opportunity to close debate.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 70 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:06 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Kenney	Rosin
Dach	LaGrange	Rowswell
Feehan	Luan	Sawhney
Glasgo	McIver	Schow

Glubish	Nixon, Jason	Schweitzer
Goodridge	Orr	Singh
Gotfried	Pitt	Williams
Gray	Pon	Wilson
Guthrie	Rehn	Yao
Hunter	Reid	

Totals: For – 29 Against – 0

[Government Motion 70 carried unanimously]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 211 Municipal Government (Firearms) Amendment Act, 2020

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Madam Chair. As this is my first opportunity to speak to Bill 211 in Committee of the Whole, I would actually like to table an amendment to Bill 211 if you are so willing. I will give copies of the amendment to the page and wait for you to have them before I proceed.

Madam Chair, it would appear that I have missed the signed copy that you need. I am sorry. You may want that.

The Chair: That's amendment rule 101.

Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. Please note that it is two pages.

Hon. member, please proceed.

Ms Glasgo: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Bill 211 has had a little bit of debate in the House so far. We know there are still two more stages of the bill to get through. In talking to stakeholders as well as hearing from other ministries, I learned that what was once a private member's bill – as we all know, as private members in the Assembly we don't have all the resources of government to draft a private member's bill. In fact, we are largely left to our own devices and just the help of Parliamentary Counsel, which is, of course, much appreciated. There are things that can be overlooked and things that we don't really know because bills need to develop, and we need to hear from more people. In hearing from stakeholders and in learning that there were things that needed to be fixed in the bill, I am proud to table amendment A1.

Madam Chair, would you like me to read A1 into the . . .

The Chair: Yes, please.

Ms Glasgo: Okay. I'd be happy to do that.

Okay. Added after section 74:

74.1(1) Subject to subsections (3) and (4), a council may not, unless approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, bring into force a bylaw respecting firearms.

(2) Subsection (1) applies to

(a) a proposed amendment respecting firearms to a bylaw . . .

(b) a new bylaw respecting firearms proposed by a council after the coming into force of this section.

(3) Subsection (1) does not apply to a bylaw respecting firearms that is in force on or before the coming into force of this section.

(4) This section does not apply to a bylaw to be approved in accordance with section 74.

Madam Chair, section 74.1(1) retains the intent of the proposed legislation to restrict the ability of municipalities to respect bylaws related to firearms. That's what we intended to do in the beginning. We know that we don't want a patchwork of firearms laws across the country. We know that this is damaging to law-abiding firearms owners. We are maintaining that commitment. This amendment just ensures that new bylaws and changes to existing bylaws that reference firearms are approved by cabinet prior to coming into force.

Section 74.1(2) avoids potential confusion and disruption regarding existing municipal bylaws passed under the current legislation. For those who are interested, a little fun fact for you: those bylaws could include anything from the Wildlife Act to regulations around hunting close to city limits. Now, of course, we don't want to change those. Those are put in in the name of public safety, and they've been in place for decades. Councils have debated those, so we're respecting those councils' decisions. The bill retains the ability of the minister responsible for the Wildlife Act, the Minister of Environment and Parks, to continue to manage hunting in Alberta, which, as we know, is very important.

The amendments proposed are housekeeping amendments that clarify the intent of the legislation, first and foremost. They do not make substantive changes to the bill but just reflect the input that we've received from departments as well as some concerned stakeholders from municipalities.

I'm happy to table the amendment today. I look forward to the vigorous debate on this topic.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Anyone wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment to Bill 211 as I think I have, you know, a bit of a unique experience. I know that some of you would know that I'm only one of two people in this House that has ever served time in the Canadian military although I want to be very clear: my time was brief. It was in the naval reserve. I have a lot of respect for people who committed significant portions of their life to the Armed Forces. I cannot claim that I did.

The reason why I bring it up is because I had the very fortunate experience while I was in the naval reserve to travel to Wainwright, where the Armed Forces base there is the centre for training in the use of firearms and weapons, of course. Although I did not particularly grow up with guns and hadn't had a lot of experience prior to my time, I turned out to be quite proficient in the use of firearms and, in fact, at the time was registered with the Canadian Armed Forces as a first-class standing with an FNC1 rifle and a marksman with a submachine gun, much to the surprise of many of my family members, and, in fact, creating a lot of concern for them that someone like myself could hit 100 per cent of the targets with a submachine gun.

10:30

You know, it is an interesting little piece of my past, and I must say that when I had that experience, I certainly had an opportunity to learn that any time one is handling a rifle or any other weapon which has the potential to kill, you really must begin that process with a deep respect for the tool in your hand. I certainly believe that guns are tools and quite legitimately are tools when used in their best way, are quite important to many people in terms of their lives

and, of course, important to the indigenous people in this province, the First Nations, the Métis, and the Inuit, who use them for not only sustaining their families' well-being but also preserving their culture and passing their traditions on to their children.

I bring to this conversation that deep respect that was instilled in me in the military. In fact, one time I made the terrible error of actually referring to my rifle as a gun and was immediately sent to run laps around the parade grounds for an hour in punishment for my reference because in the navy guns are very large objects on the front of ships that are used to blast other ships out of the water. Those things that you carry are definitely rifles and not guns. They actually made me repeat a phrase during that one hour of running that I cannot repeat in the House because it would be unparliamentary to say.

Ms Hoffman: It was memorable.

Mr. Feehan: It was memorable.

The point being that they really wanted to instill in us a deep respect for the rifles that we were using and to not be casual about them, to not act in a way, you know, that would threaten the well-being of others. I mean, we certainly were using live rounds when we were in Wainwright and could easily have killed another person had we done anything that was outside of the bounds of the regulations that were provided to us.

What it was that kept us all safe was that deep sense of respect for our weapons and the regulations and rules that guided our use of those weapons. Those rules were very intricate, by the way. We're not talking about just generally that one must be safe and handle their weapons well. They would be as detailed as: when you are marching, how do you hold your weapon? When you are turning to the right, which direction do you move your weapon in? When you turn to the left, which direction do you move your weapon in? When you turn around, how do you turn around without turning your weapon so that it faced other individuals in the parade? They were very detailed. What kept us safe was regulation, was the fact that we actually had a series of rules that were well tested and well intended to provide for the well-being of the people who were using the weapons and, of course, for the people who might have been subject to any misadventure on our part in this situation.

As a result, I know that I come to this bill with respect for the topic at hand, and I certainly have some pride for the success I had in achieving such a significant status with my ability to shoot. I looked at the bill to see what it was that it was trying to achieve, and unfortunately I find myself, I guess, perhaps just disappointed about the intention of the bill. It's not even that it's horrid or that I want to rail against it, but it really, certainly lacks what it could have entailed.

This amendment essentially, although the member described it as only being a small adjustment, actually speaks to one of the major faults I will be speaking about of this bill when we're outside of this amendment, and that is the intrusion on municipal governments. As I spoke earlier tonight, I'm very concerned about this provincial government constantly stepping into municipal jurisdiction to tell them that they are inappropriate and insignificant in terms of their electoral responsibilities. I was prepared to stand up on the main motion and really kind of go after that point, that you are not respecting municipal governments again, duly elected governments. You keep telling us that you support democracy, yet you're the ones who intrude on democracy all the time at the municipal level. It's very disconcerting. It shows a complete lack of respect for municipal governments.

You know, we've kind of gone through this evening a number of places where you've done that: when you changed linear

assessment, when you changed the arrangement with the RCMP, when you give tax deferrals to corporations from paying their bills when you don't even pay your own tax bill, which is actually done by a grant, of course, from the provincial government. You do all these kinds of things, and when you put votes in the municipal election process that they've asked you not to put there, constantly disrespecting . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Madam Chair.

**Point of Order
Addressing the Chair**

Mr. McIver: The hon. member keeps saying "you" and "you" and "you," and I'm pretty sure he's not talking to you, Madam Chair, which he ought to be.

Mr. Feehan: I will edit my use of the phrase "you." I accept the remark. I'm sorry.

Do you need to . . .

The Chair: No. That's fine. Thank you. Please proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Speaking of this amendment, I think it recognizes something that I already was concerned about. Obviously, the member who proposed this amendment has been receiving feedback from municipalities that indeed I am correct that they view it as another intrusion on their work and that they have brought in this amendment to try to ameliorate the problematic relationship that they have described in this bill. I guess I have to say thank you to the member, through you, Madam Chair, of course, for introducing this amendment. You know, I look forward to potentially more amendments coming forward that would be along the lines of providing a greater level of respect for the municipal governments.

I leave my comments at this time. I have much more to say but will wait for the main motion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Wonderful. Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, just ever so briefly. I heard the hon. member speak just now about intrusion into municipal jurisdiction when, in fact, Madam Chair, the intrusion into municipal jurisdiction was done by the federal government going past the provinces, which is completely not within the proper way of doing things. The bill put forward by the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat actually sets right that intrusion into municipal governance that the federal

government so inappropriately has tried to do, to effectively do an end run around the provinces. Most improper. I would just correct the previous speaker and credit the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat with a bill that makes an attempt to set right the mistake and the, frankly, bad manners by the federal government.

The Chair: Any other members on amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1, as moved by the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill, Bill 211. Any other members wishing to speak?

If not, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 211 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

10:40

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Chair, I'd move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 211. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

The hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 7, 2021.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:42 p.m.]

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